

Damage control mode

Our leaders don't seem to realise how absurd it looks that 11 Brahmin men sit on sofas in Baluwatar to design a new future for the nation. Nepal is the most unequal country in Asia, and there has to be a system of governance that spreads opportunity, removes discrimination and sets right historical wrongs.

Editorial page 2



After a people's war

We can have federalism if we must, but it is guaranteed to keep Nepal poor.

Guest Column page 3
by Bihari Krishna Shrestha

Fooling some people all the time

A new constitution may eventually be declared on 27 May but the compromised document will leave many dissatisfied.

By the way page 11
by Anurag Acharya

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SAMIR JUNG THAPA

It took them 99 days to traverse 1,555 horizontal kilometres and possibly a couple of hundred vertical kilometres from one end of Nepal to the other. But when

they finished recently, the four-member team led by 21-time Mt Everest summiteer, Apa Sherpa, said he came to appreciate Nepal's unity in its diversity. The trekkers magnified the

overwhelming desire among the people they met along the way for peaceful coexistence among communities and better living standards for their children. Nepalis all along the route

wanted this message to go to the rulers in Kathmandu.

see page 6-7

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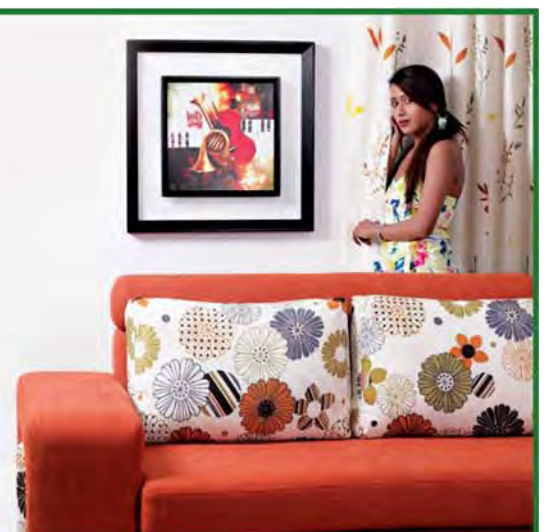
Apa Sherpa speaks about GHT

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DAMAGE CONTROL MODE

When things are as polarised as they are in the current constitution debate, and when all sides want all or nothing, any political compromise was sure to be unpalatable to many. And so it was.

The street protests by Madhesi and Janajati groups that followed the deal struck on Tuesday among the four main political forces were necessary muscle-flexing. The political leadership maybe narrow-minded, near-sighted, and greedy for power and money but they have worked out the best give-and-take arrangement possible under the circumstances. They have even averaged out the number of provinces between the demand for 14 and 6.

However, the names and boundaries of future provinces were too divisive and volatile to be addressed at present. Doing that would have delayed the constitution and opened up a can of worms. By deferring the most contentious issues to the parliaments of the future provinces themselves, the party leaderships passed the buck on to those who wanted such provinces. This buys everyone some time, but it makes future negotiations over carving up the country even more fraught because of the potential for pitting Janajati against Janajati and Madhesi against Madhesi over what they should call their provinces, what their territorial outlines should be, or worse: raise questions all over again about the 11-state model. But, the leaders must have reasoned, we will cross that bridge when we get there.

It doesn't bode well for the future of the country



BIKASH DWARE

Despite the deal on the constitution we face the twin dangers of a demagogue president presiding over a country disintegrating into inter-ethnic squabbles

If the debate over state structure becomes a part of the deal-making over power, and the constitution is drafted to suit the ego of one man. It can't be swayed by a vocal minority of sloganeering activists who hold the silent majority ransom with the threat of unleashing an ethnic holocaust. The extreme hate speech on social media and sections of the press is already having a corrosive effect.

There are serious problems with Nepali society. It remains the most unequal in Asia, and there are historically marginalised groups that continue to live in near-slavery. Despite signs of greater inclusivity, the civil service, the top leadership of all parties, the police

and army continue to be dominated by mainly men belonging to the traditionally privileged caste groups. Many of them may have got there through dint of hard work, but no one can argue against the need to have more gender, ethnic and caste balance in officialdom. And it's not just the numbers, one has to be a Nepali woman, Dalit, Madhesi or Janajati to know the daily discrimination, arrogance and ethnocentrism with which the ruling class groups treat them. Our leaders don't

seem to realise how absurd it looks to have 11 Brahmin men and a Newar sit on sofas in Baluwatar to design a new future for Nepal.

These are genuine grievances, even if some leaders of marginalised groups may be using it for political ends. They are just articulating the anger that is there. The indigenous and Madhesi groups argue that only ethnicity-based federalism will redress those grievances. Disregarding the opinion of a majority of Nepalis who don't want to correct a historical mistake by making an even bigger one, the political parties buckled under pressure and have now agreed to carve up the country.

Among the many dangers we face, the two main ones now are the demolition of democracy by a demagogue president, and the country disintegrating into inter-ethnic squabbles.

The thing to do now is to go into damage control mode to make sure that the new federalism model does not lead to the country's disintegration, doesn't keep us poor, and doesn't turn us into a dictatorship.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

MORE THINGS CHANGE

We really don't care who is in power as long as there is economic prosperity and hope for a better future ('More things change more they stay the same', editorial, #604). But sadly, Nepali leaders don't seem to care about public opinion and are busy with their own personal agendas.

Asdf

- The succession of variable-point agreements brokered between leading politicians (and enabled by New Delhi's solicitous hands) proves that public opinion means less than it ever has before in Nepal. If the latest Himalmedia poll numbers mean anything at all, it is that mainstream 'democratic' parties have sabotaged their own legitimacy so badly that an unreformed terrorist organisation headed by volatile mavericks enjoys greater public credibility than the parties who have long since abdicated their responsibility as the stewards of multiparty democracy.

John Kelleher

- Not all leaders in Nepal are bad, I think some of them are even genuinely concerned about the welfare of the country, but such people are not allowed to work. But we ordinary citizens are ready to support anyone from any party who can ensure peace, stability and progress.

Chiranjibi Nepal

- Bhattarai's popularity may be at its peak and public opinion about Dahal might be waning, but there are striking similarities between these two. Both are responsible for the deaths of 17,000 Nepalis, both have not renounced violence as a political tool, both entered mainstream

politics not because of their integrity or performance, but through the 12-point deal signed in India, and both support a political system where corruption and crime are rampant. The only reason why the Nepali press is more favourable towards Bhattarai is because, unlike Dahal who is rigid in his beliefs, he is a smart player and knows how to be flexible to gain maximum political leverage.

Nirmal

- It does not matter whether it's Dahal or Bhattarai, trusting communists is a bad idea to begin with. Besides, there is very little difference between the two comrades in terms of their characters and moral standards. It's unfortunate that we have to pin our hopes on 'leaders' who are responsible for the deaths of thousands of Nepalis. I hope we don't elect Bhattarai as our future president.

Kedar Sharma

- Dahal is a true chameleon who keeps changing colours. When he is with Newars he turns into a Newar, when he is with Limbus he becomes a Limbu and when he is among Magars he pretends to be a Magar. His popularity might have fallen, but he knows how to please everyone and I have a feeling he has some tricks up his sleeves.

Channakya

- Bombs have exploded in Janakpur and Birgunj, the far-west is crippled by indefinite strikes, various groups are declaring Nepal bandas whenever they please and ordinary Nepalis are suffering as usual. There is a disturbing sense of déjà vu, as if we have gone back 10 years. The only difference is that today the Maoists are at the receiving end.

Danny Shrestha

- Two national unity governments and two prime ministers in three weeks? Is this some kind of joke? We should not tolerate such drama and nonsense anymore. The politicians need to be told enough is enough.

Suresh

- I wish the Himalmedia survey had asked people if they preferred the 1990 constitution over the new one or whether they would still support a ceremonial monarchy rather than an out of control republican state. As these past six years have clearly demonstrated, promises of 'naya' Nepal and 'naya' constitution are nothing more than dishonest reassurances made by greedy, short-sighted politicians who are desperate to get their share of the pie.

Budabaaje

TERRAIN SHIFTS

I would like to thank Himalmedia, data collectors as well as the respondents ('The terrain shifts', Kunda Dixit, #604). *Nepali Times* has done a great service to the people by publishing the survey results at an important juncture when we are trying to instill democracy, freedom and equality. For the first time since jana andolan 2006, I feel good about my country because common sense seems to have prevailed among Nepalis and as the poll shows they are more worried about economics than politics.

Gaury Adhikary

- This is another brilliant work by Himalmedia which I hope will set a precedence for our political elites to start listening to what the people are saying. I now look forward to similar statistics in other areas of health, education, and economy so that proper policies can be developed to support the needs of 90 per cent of

Nepalis who find it hard to make ends meet.

Dinesh

- Who cares about statistics that can easily be manipulated? If we really want to know how Nepalis feel about the state of their country or their leaders, we should go talk to people protesting on the streets.

Bhoj

MAKE-OR-BREAK

Since the Nepali media relies so heavily on political parties for financial support, it has to forgo integrity and follow the party line ('Make-or-break-media', #604). We need more publications like NT, who are rich, independent and free to speak their minds.

Sarah Shrestha

VROOM VROOM

Thank you Naresh Newar for sharing your cross-country biking experience with us ('Vroom, vroom', #604). I also drove from Kathmandu to my hometown in Surkhet last winter and it was one of the most memorable rides of my life. And you are spot on with your observation of how Nepalis are living together peacefully regardless of the caste or ethnic group they belong to. It's actually the politicians who are desperate to break our nation into pieces in the name of federalism.

Bikram GC

- Naresh, you are one of the few journalists who remains committed to exploring Nepal beyond Kathmandu and your article reminds me of the time I lived in Nepal, when the air outside the capital always seemed fresher - in more ways than one.

Marty

- Congratulations on your

successful motorcycle tour across Nepal and India and thank you for showing us how ordinary Nepalis feel about social harmony and national integrity.

Kiran L

- Going on a cross-country motorbike ride is on my bucket list, but I just haven't had the opportunity or courage. I am happy I was able to live one of my life-long dreams through this article.

Eastern girl

- This is a brilliant piece. I prefer reading stories like these, rather than 'radical' articles written by journalists on behalf of their parent parties.

Biker

GOBBLEMENT

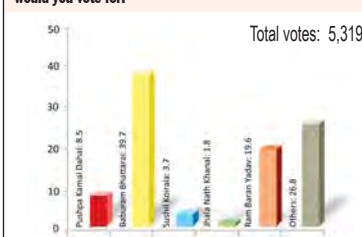
A communist whose net worth is one billion dollars - are you serious Ass ('Gobblement of Nepal', backside, #604)? Do the Maoist cadres know how rich their boss is? Maybe Dahal could teach us poor Nepalis how to make this kind of money, that way we could all be wealthy and he would be doing the country a social service.

Badri Shrestha



nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #605

Q. If there was an election for directly-elected executive, who would you vote for:



Weekly Internet Poll # 606. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. The 11 State model agreed upon by the parties on Tuesday is:



GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

We now have a fait accompli that Nepal will be carved up into 11 provinces. In any other country this would be called gerrymandering, but here it was just politicians who found appeasement too tempting to resist.

Even though the political leadership knows that ethnicity-based federalism would be a disaster, they were too weak-kneed to oppose it. The only benefit proponents have been able to cite is that it would 'bring government closer to the people'. But existing evidence shows this argument to be flawed.

Nepal has had elected local councils for nearly half a century now, first called District and Village Panchayats and now known as VDCs and DDCs. After the mid-1990s, these councils had elected officials till 2002, and since then have been run by state-appointed secretaries. But local politicians still play a decisive role in the distribution of pork-barrel funds and state allocations.

These local bodies, in whatever form, have all along been bastions of corruption in which all party officials carve up the pie and collectively partake of it, irrespective of whichever party is at the helm in Kathmandu. The problem is that the feudalistic order continues to reign supreme, and most political leaders belong to local elites who have always derived their power ascriptively without having to be accountable to the community members in its exercise.

This is why most politicians are corrupt in Nepal, and they get away with it with impunity under the cover of mutual protection. With such a feudal order remaining intact, Nepal's imminent federalisation would only mean dividing up the country into new feudal fiefdoms, and we will effectively be jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Wait, it gets worse. Take the example of the West Seti project, which the Maoist government has just awarded to China's Three Gorges after 15 years of deadlock, but which may never be built if we continue with federalism. As directed by the Natural Resources



NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

After a people's war

We can have federalism if we must, but it is guaranteed to keep Nepal poor

Committee of parliament, West Seti will be developed as a multipurpose project, which would mean that the 290 m high dam would submerge 2,166 hectares of land (619 hectares of that prime farmland) and displace 16,221 people in Doti, Dandeldhura, Baitadi and Bajhang. It would release 90 cubic metres of regulated water per second, sufficient to irrigate 270,000 hectares for non-paddy cultivation and 90,000 hectares for paddy cultivation in the downstream districts of Kanchanpur, Kailali and Bardia.

The project's multiple benefits in terms of power and irrigation could fundamentally transform the life and economy of the impoverished Karnali region. However, a federalised Nepal would resurrect the same argument that has stalled Nepal-India cooperation in power projects like West Seti. Only this time the disagreements over who should

pay for downstream benefits of water regulation would be between states within the country. The three-week shutdown of far-western Nepal by opposing sides this month just presages what such inter-province conflict over natural resources would look like in the future.

With the division of the country into several autonomous entities, the question would be why the upstream provinces should not settle for a lower dam just to generate power if the downstream districts are not ready to compensate them by paying for irrigation benefits? The same thing would happen on the Budi Gandaki project for which Kuwaiti funds have lately been secured. Our pro-federal politicians do not seem to realise that there is a sanctity to the unique geography of Nepal whose integrity must not be tampered with in the name of populism.

Despite our continued poverty and bad governance, Nepal is known and

respected around the world for two achievements at least: the rejuvenation of our denuded forests through community forestry user groups, and the projected meeting of MDG targets on child and maternal survival through our nationwide network of mothers' groups and female community health volunteers. Both happened because of local empowerment.

The lesson is that we need devolution of authority to communities themselves, and well beyond the feudal local elites. Devolving power to local ethnic warlords will keep Nepal poor in the name of redressing the grievances of marginalised ethnic groups. ■

Bihari K Shrestha is a veteran civil servant who served with the National Planning Commission, and the ministries of health and physical planning and local development.

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LINEZ/12

The losing game

We are too busy fighting amongst ourselves to notice what we have lost



PICS: SUNIL POKHAREL

THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

If anyone still had any doubt that the delays in finishing the constitution was never about ideological differences between the parties, and more about give-and-take over power sharing, Tuesday's agreement should have put those doubts to rest.

We have decided on a mixed form of governance not because that is what the country needs, but just so Pushpa Kamal Dahal can become the next directly-elected president.

To let him do that we have closed our eyes to all sorts of complications that can arise from dual power centres of having the parliament elect a prime minister, and the people elect a president. And this is supposed to put an end to political instability caused by a parliamentary system?

The number of states, their boundaries and what to call them have always eluded consensus. But this week we suddenly have an agreement on a 11-state model with names and territories of the provinces to be decided later. We would have liked to believe that the decision on 11 states was an outcome of serious discussion among

academics and experts. But like the form of governance, it was just a part of the package deal on power-sharing.

The parties cut themselves a political deal, and voila all contentious issues on the constitution were suddenly resolved. This has always been how decisions have been made in this country. Not, as we naïvely believed, because the parties had woken up to the urgency of meeting the constitution deadline, or because they were concerned about the country's future.

It is becoming clear that if the Indian ambassador had not speeded up the power sharing deal among the parties, they would be squabbling till D-day

TO EACH ITS OWN: Tharu community in Attariya demanding Kailali and Kanchanpur to be split from the Far West (left). People of Dadeldhura demanding a united Far West. They want Dadeldhura to be the capital (right).

and beyond. It is pointless to lament foreign interference when our leaders are so hapless. If we don't clean up our mess, our neighbours will do it for us. But Tuesday's agreement sets a bad precedence: the ambassador of a foreign country midwifing a new government in the parlour of the chairman of the largest political party. Where else on earth does this happen?

And so it is with the Europeans and their stoking the

discontent of ethnic pressure groups. Members of the Janajati caucus in parliament are recipients of foreign funding and the caucus has now become a parallel power centres beyond the control of parent parties. Will the donors take responsibility when, instead of giving a political voice to Nepal's marginalised, their money directly contributed to taking Nepal back to the days of squabbling fiefdoms?

To be sure, there are lots of things that need fixing. Caste, gender and ethnic discrimination are rife despite laws against them. The civil service and security agencies have a disproportionate number of people from the traditionally dominant groups. But there are ways to deal with social injustice, and they don't include weakening our national unity and shredding our social fabric.

A constitution is not just about content, but also about process. What is the point of having a CA if the constitution was going to be written by a dozen priests behind closed doors? Far from reflecting the aspirations of the Nepali people, it seems our CA members and leaders will stand for the interests of donors and pressure groups to which they have sold their loyalties. Last week's Himalmedia poll shows that the caucus and other proponents of ethnic federalism are out of sync with public opinion even among their own communities.

And this is why federalism, when it is finally instituted, will not improve things. We are going to remain a country that will have top-down governance, except that instead of having one centre we are now going to have 11.

A strong, united and independent Nepal seems hardly to be on anyone's priority list. We are too busy fighting amongst ourselves to notice what we have lost. This is exactly the kind of situation demagogues hope to get us into so they can benefit from the chaos and anarchy. 🇳🇵

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

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Last chance on FATF

In our obsession with the constitution, let's not forget the other deadline Nepal has to meet



MY TWO PAISA
Paavan Mathema

Our lawmakers and politicians are notoriously bad at multi-tasking and they don't work well with deadlines. They have stayed up past midnight to extend the CA's mandate on four occasions. There is an 11th hour attitude about everything.

In February, Nepal narrowly escaped being blacklisted by Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global anti-money laundering watchdog for not endorsing three bills against money laundering: Bill on Controlling Organised Crime, Bill on Extradition and Bill on Mutual Legal Assistance, as well as other recommendations. The commitment was made two years ago.

However, the extension until June granted through some arm-twisting by European embassies in Kathmandu and strong pressure from PM Baburam Bhattarai in February has been wasted. When the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG), an analysis wing of the global anti-money laundering

body of FATF, asked for the country's progress report last week, Nepal had nothing new to show except for new directives issued by NRB in March to track the flow of dirty money. Three months since the extension, the three bills are collecting dust in the parliament. Nepal is yet to fully comply with the 49 recommendations laid down by the FATF. Asia Pacific Group (APG), the regional wing of FATF, now rates Nepal as one of the poor performers in the region.

If blacklisted, Nepal's financial system will lose its credibility as FATF has warned its member nations to take strict measures against blacklisted countries that pose substantial money laundering and terrorism financing. The letters of credit issued by local banks may or may not be honoured. Local businessmen will not be able to survive the charges placed on

blacklisted countries, and trade will suffer. Nepal's reputation and its economy will be hit.

It will also strain inflow of foreign investments and ties with multinationals: not good



news for Nepal Investment Year 2012-13. Already, we are seeing effects. In the last two months two institutions, Citibank and WashigtonFirst Bank have denied to service accounts of the Nepal Embassy in Washington. Citibank cited

that it was an institution that strictly adhered to anti-money laundering policies, and now WashigtonFirst has given similar reasons. Experts fear that such action could spread rapidly to banks in Europe, Canada and countries that are the core members of FATF. Worse, it could extend to private sector operations which would be devastating for our financial sector.

In February, the endorsement of the bills was stalled by the hardline faction of the Maoists, saying that the bills are against the national interest and are being imposed on the direction of 'imperialist forces'. The hardline faction still opposes the bills even though these compliances will help Nepal develop a healthy financial system, create a positive investment environment and boost international trade.

The FATF deadline coinciding with the constitution deadline has been unfortunate, but there is still time. Nepal's inability to endorse the bills and failure to deliver on other commitments will be tabled in the next FATF meeting, scheduled for June in Italy. The lawmakers should understand that the cost of non-compliance is high for the country's reputation and economy. FATF has already shown leniency once, we cannot use the excuse of 'political transition' to buy time again and again.

nepalitimes.com
Get on with it, #593

BIZ BRIEFS

Cleaning up



Xpress Money, an international money transfer company, has joined hands with Asian Trekking to launch 'Xpress Money Eco-Everest Expedition 2012'. The clean-up trek will be led by Apa Sherpa and Dawa Steven Sherpa.

Say cheese

Syakar Trading Company, the sole distributor of Honda Motorcycle in Nepal, has launched 'Me and my Dio', a Facebook-based photo competition for Honda Dio owners. The competition will be from 8 May to 8 June for a grand prize of Rs 100,000.



Happy beerday

Gorkha Brewery celebrates Tuborg's 132th anniversary with the launch of Tuborg Big Can (500 ml). The can is available at an introductory price of Rs 150.

Power shots

Canon has released eight new digital compact cameras including Powershot SX-260 and SX-240.

Charity deal

Hamro Deal, an online-based company, has collected over Rs 25,200 for Seti flood victims. The amount was handed over to Nepal Red Cross Society last week.



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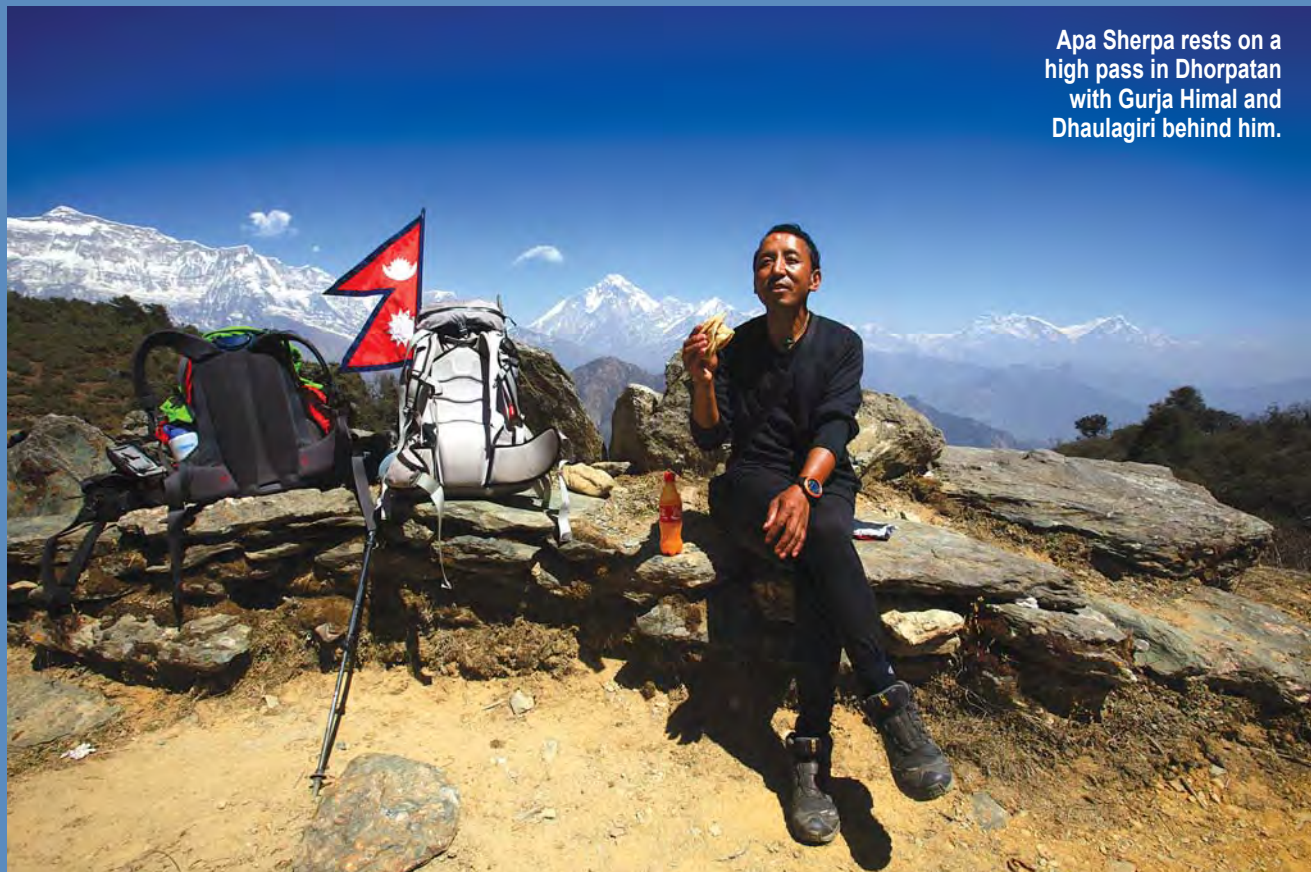
At the start of the trek in Ghunsa near Kangchenjunga, Apa Sherpa pays tribute to Nepal's top conservationists who died in a helicopter crash there in November 2008.



At the snowed in Tso Rolpa glacial lake in Rolwaling, the trek team inspected the dam built to regulate the level of water in the lake and reduce the risk of its bursting.



Everywhere the trekkers went, they saw bulldozers, and roads being built into areas of Nepal that used to be remote.



Apa Sherpa rests on a high pass in Dhorpatan with Gurja Himal and Dhaulagiri behind him.

The greatest Himalayan trail

It took them 99 days, 1,555 horizontal kilometres and possibly a couple of hundred vertical kilometres to get from one end of Nepal to the other. But when they finished it, the four-member team led by 21-time Mt Everest summiteers, Apa Sherpa, said they got an unparalleled lesson in Nepal's natural and human diversity.

"I have climbed Mt Everest many times by going up and down, but this time I was going sideways, through the villages, forests, glaciers and along rivers and lakes of Nepal," Apa Sherpa told *Nepali Times*, "and I realised just how rich our country is."

Other members of the team, all bearded by the end of it, concurred. Journalist Saurav

Dhakal took four months off from his job at Kantipur Television, and says he learnt more from this trip than earning degrees at university: "I realised just how interdependent Nepal's different regions are on each other, and how we live in perfect social harmony."

As for people's reactions to the debate on federalism and the new constitution, Dhakal said,

A scenic snow panorama of Manaslu and Himalchuli from a settlement in Gorkha





“While politicians in Kathmandu are busy hashing out last minute agreements, the people we met during our trek told us they still don’t understand what federalism means or how the new constitution is going to affect them. But regardless of the changes that might take place post-27 May, they are determined to maintain the harmony which exists between different communities. Even groups who are more aware of their ethnic identities are adamant about not letting group interests override the nation’s unity.”

Dawa Steven Sherpa, who has also climbed Mt Everest twice, has become somewhat of an environmental expert. He says the effects of climate change can be seen all over Nepal: in the receding glaciers, the dry springs, the forest fires, erratic rains. “The only way to deal with it is



to raise living standards so the poorest Nepalis can cope with the disruptions that climate change will bring,” he says.

Photographer Samir Jung Thapa is a man of few words, but he took thousands of stunning photographs which

will be turned one day into a visual chronicle of this epic trek. Some of Thapa’s photographs are printed here.

The Climate-smart Celebrity Trek was organised by the Himalayan Climate Initiative (HCI) to help draw global



and domestic attention to the effect of climate change in the Himalaya, and to strengthen the resilience of Nepalis to deal with the changes it will bring.

“Our aim was to spread awareness, and in this we have succeeded beyond our expectations, the trek got worldwide publicity and Nepalis came out in overwhelming numbers to support Apa and his team as they walked across Nepal,” Prashant Singh of HCI said.

HCI hopes that the trek will also help spread the word about the beauty of the Himalayas and the adventure of trekking across

some of the world’s highest mountains. Tourism income will then help lift living standards in the neglected remote regions of Nepal.

Says Apa: “Every one knows Nepal is a scenic country, but what I learnt from this trip is that the Nepali people are kind, generous and friendly.”

nepalitimes.com

The state of the Himalaya, #592
Making Nepal (climate) resilient, #601
A trekker’s best friend, #601



EVENTS

Exhibition on Everest, a photography exhibition by Jeff Botz which showcases Mount Everest in its true glory. 26 April to 26 May, 9.30 am to 5pm, Image Ark Studio, Kulimha Tole, Patan

World Fair Trade Day, exhibition of handicraft and agro food products by 40 FTG Nepal members. Visit food stalls serving typical Newari cuisine. 19 May, 10am to 5pm, Baithak Event Venue, Tripureshwar

Master Harold and the Boys, explore a beautiful play by Athol Fugard set in the apartheid era of South Africa. Rs 200 (students) and Rs 500 (adults). Tickets can be purchased from Dhokaima Cafe (Patan Dhoka), Bookworm (Jhamsikhel or Radisson Hotel (Lazimpat), 25 to 26 May and 1 to 3 June, 5.30 pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9808554122



BUDDHISM IN RUSSIA, an exhibition by the Russian Centre of Science and Culture and Lumbini Buddhist University. 27 April to 27 May, 10am to 5pm, Russian Centre of Science and Culture

Sattya in Pokhari, If you find yourself in Pokhara in the coming weeks, be sure to visit Sattya and take part in their numerous workshops and film screenings. 16 May to 30 May, Freedom Café, Lakeside, Pokhara

Modern Metamorphoses, a modern take on one of the most renowned Latin

poems, Ovid's Metamorphoses. Rs 800 (including tea), every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 4 May to 20 May, 7.15 pm, Hotel Vajra, 4271545, vajra@mos.com.np

The New Faces of Tibet, Spanish artist Andrea Lopez Iglesias' presents a brave new look on Tibet. 11 May to 24 May, 11am to 5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal

MUSIC



DEGAA SATURDAY MUSIC NIGHTS, enjoy live performances every Saturday with bands like Upendra and Friends who will serenade you while you relish Degaa's special Newari food. 28 April to 19 May, 7pm to 10pm, Degaa Restro Lounge, 5008679

Rewind at Trishara, take a break this Friday with a revamped menu, cocktails and great music. 18 May, 6.45 pm, Trishara Restaurant, Lazimpat

Karaoke Night, a karaoke night to support Alay Nepal's fund raiser along with Filipino Community Nepal for underprivileged, adopted children in Budhanilkantha. Rs 400, 19 May, 3pm onwards, 8 degrees, Jhamsikhel

DINING

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



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

Manny's Eatery and Bar, special lunch packages for a quick snack or filling lunch. Jawalakhel, Shaligram Complex, 5536919

Live Band at The Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu every evening except Saturdays and Tuesdays. 4411818 ext. 1330

Yellow Chili, enjoy renowned chef Sanjeev Kapoor's dishes as this restaurant serves mouthwatering Indian delicacies. Thapathali



PASTO VOSTRO, a pretty place which serves great pasta. Their bacon wrapped sausages are a must. Thamel

Fuji Bakery, tucked in Chakupat this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat and banana cake. Chakupat

Tonic Restaurant, amazing food fit for family dinners or a night out with friends. Pokhara

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



LORRY'S, a newly opened restaurant with great ambience and good food, their Bistecca Al Funghi is a must try. Jamsikhel



BLACK AND WHITE CAFÉ, a great place to spend a quiet afternoon surfing the net with some bakery items like the Swiss Apple Pie and chocolate crepe with homemade icecream. Lakeside, Pokhara

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

Saigon Pho, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lazimpat



MIKE'S BREAKFAST, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Naxal, 4424303

Bistro Caroline, a highly recommended place to eat and relax, their chocolate mousse and fish dishes are a must for foodies. Lakeside, Pokhara

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

Sal's Pizza, almost round, almost cheap, always delicious, try out the cheesiest pizzas in town. Lazimpat, behind Jazz Upstairs

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



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



बम्पर उपहार

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अर्धवार्षिक ग्राहक बम्परबाहेक अन्य योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
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No Name Restaurant, friendly ambience with palatable dishes- try their delicious momochas. *Putalisadak*

Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, enjoy Latin tunes with special discounts on great food and drinks. *Shaligram Hotel Complex, 5536919*



CHONGQING FAST FOOD, gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. *Thamel*



HANKOOK SARANG, from Bibimbab to Samgyeopsal, Hankook offers a wide range of Korean delicacies at affordable prices. *Thamel*

New Orleans, offers a great variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. Try the rosemary chicken and hamburgers. *Jhamsikhel, 5522708*

GETAWAYS



HOTEL LANDMARK, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage, but also offers great services and boasts an award winning restaurant, The Hungry Eye. 00977-061-462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com

Grand Norling, 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*



WATER FRONT RESORT, this eco-friendly resort has it all whether it be birdwatching, paragliding, horse riding, mountain biking or boating in this. *Sedi Height, Lakeside, 977-61-466370, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*

DINING IN THE DARK

Have you ever wondered how it would feel dining without seeing what you are eating? The Israeli Embassy and Nepal Association of the Blind are offering guests a unique dining experience where they are served food and drinks by blind waiters in a dark room. Set up within the premises of Imago Dei restaurant in Nag Pokhari, Nepal's first blind restaurant aims to promote the integration of differently-abled people into the community. Israeli Ambassador Hanan Goder-Goldberg revealed that feedback from customers has been remarkable and he personally enjoyed the experience. While the restaurant is open until 24 May, Goder-Goldberg hints that if the turnout is good they might be in business for longer. A standard meal of salad, pasta and cake is priced at Rs 1100, out of which Rs 100 is donated towards the welfare of blind people.



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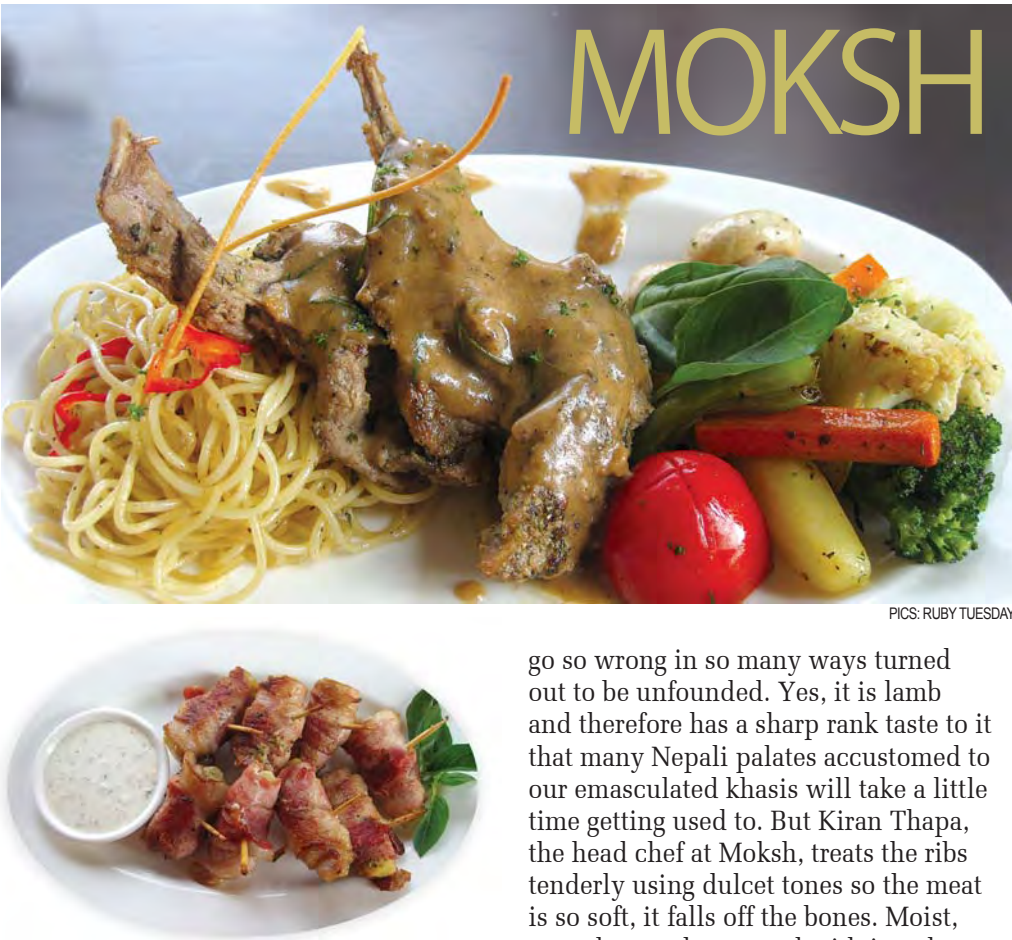
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SOMEPLACE ELSE

I have been to Moksh countless times- to enjoy the music, watch plays, visit the yoga studio, buy books, at photo shoots and never have I had a meal there. Don't get me wrong- I had sampled the snacks to accompany the beer, but that was the extent of it. I didn't really think of Moksh as a place one went to dine and I can't stop beating myself up about all those lost eating opportunities. Moksh was one of the first establishments in that stretch of Patan which has now been dubbed, to the great despair of local residents, Jhamel. Popular with both Nepalis and expats, it has been a favourite haunt for many. The compound offers not only good food (which I didn't know about) and excellent music- being the home base of 1974 AD- but has evolved into a hub for artistic, cultural and musical pursuits. A lazy afternoon found me with nothing to do and time to kill- in my book the perfect reason to go eat. And am I glad that the powers that be guided me



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY



propitiously to Moksh. I walked in with no expectations and came out satiated and satisfied. The Bacon Wrapped Potato Sticks (Rs 250) and the Greek Salad (Rs 275) were adequate but nothing to write home to mama about. My eloquence waits to describe the Rack of Lamb (Rs 800) - perfect cuts of Australian lamb served with steamed vegetables and rosemary sauce. My initial trepidation at ordering a dish that could

go so wrong in so many ways turned out to be unfounded. Yes, it is lamb and therefore has a sharp rank taste to it that many Nepali palates accustomed to our emasculated khasis will take a little time getting used to. But Kiran Thapa, the head chef at Moksh, treats the ribs tenderly using dulcet tones so the meat is so soft, it falls off the bones. Moist, succulent and seasoned with just the right amount of rosemary- discernable but not overpowering- each bite is a gustatory extravagance. The Banana Crêpes were not the most appetising to look at and I turned my nose dismissively at the gratuitous amounts of freshly made white cream sauce that covered the crêpes for being savoury and not appropriate for the dessert, but the sauce actually provides a very nice foil to the sweetness of the fruit



and syrup; a piquant marriage of flavours. Kiran sat down to have a little chat and informed us about how all the meat is imported from Thailand and the green produce sourced fresh from organic farms in Bhaktapur, that the Duck Breast with Mushroom Sauce and Beer Batterfish are the most ordered items from the continental menu. He talked about the food he prepares and listening to him you realise that cooking is more than just a job for him- it's his passion and the dishes are all the better for it. He also told me about customers who keep coming back just for the fish and prawn specialties he conjures up using Indian spices that he serves with naans and rotis. Moksh, you know I will be back. **Ruby Tuesday**

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MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

W.E. a film about Wallis Simpson, the twice divorced American woman who stole the heart of King Edward VIII, who in turn abdicated his throne to marry her, is directed by Madonna, born Madonna Louise Ciccone, and who now, of course, is simply known by her first name. A film with such infamous subject matter, directed by a world famous pop star certainly begs the question, “Is it any good?” - especially considering Madonna’s previous attempts at being in front of the camera have been mostly disastrous, a case in point being the film *Swept Away* (2002) in which she played the lead role directed by her then husband Guy Ritchie.

W.E. – the initials stand for “Wallis” and “Edward”, an abbreviation the couple used privately between themselves mostly when Edward was giving Wallis extravagantly beautiful jewelry, is a surprising film. Even if one can separate oneself from the famous name behind the camera, it is always difficult to stop from wondering how much of the directorial impetus is the person itself, and whether or not, if the film is decent, the director had a lot of “help”.

The film is surprising, therefore, because it is much more than its beautifully made surface of glittering period costumes (Wallis, played by the ethereal and fiercely intelligent Andrea Riseborough is often stunningly dressed in recreated pieces by Schiaparelli, Dior, and Vionnet) and wonderfully detailed and stylish sets, which in this 15 million dollar film, jump from Buckingham Palace to the Bois de Bologne, Portofino, and a stunning Manhattan apartment (to name just a few).

Not wanting to stick to a conventional bio-pic type structure, Madonna, who co-wrote the script with Alek Keshishian, has

W.E.

decided to juxtapose Wallis’ story with that of a modern couple based in 1998 in Manhattan where Wally Winthrop, played by the very talented but under-used Abbie Cornish, lives a seemingly glamorous life with her famous and lauded psychiatrist husband, William, in the aforementioned Manhattan apartment.

Wally, named after Wallis herself, is obsessed with the idea that the story of Simpson and the former King of England is the ultimate love story; the story of a King who gave up his country for the love of a woman. Previously a researcher at Sotheby’s, Wally haunts the about to open Sotheby’s auction of Wallis and Edward’s prized possessions: jewelry, silver engraved cigarette cases, Wallis’s elegant gloves etc.

Increasingly isolated by her seemingly perfect husband, who insisted when they got married that she stop working, Wally struggles to understand the reality behind the much speculated about relationship between the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (Wallis and Edward were given this title after Edward’s abdication of the throne, though they were never allowed to return to England).

The story jumps back and forth between Wallis and Wally’s lives, introducing each character and their backgrounds, love stories, and doing a credible job of making each woman seem real, yet vulnerable. Slowly, the central question of the film comes to the forefront. Both Wally (and Madonna) seek to know, contrary to most people’s inclinations, what, if anything, did Wallis Simpson, the most reviled woman of the 20th century, give up for Edward, her third husband, and a former King of England?

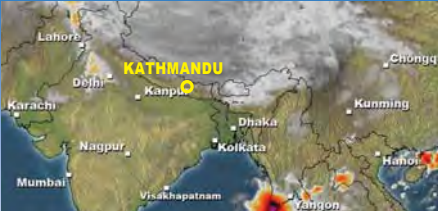
Every director needs a wonderful cast to pull off ambitious stories with questions like these at their heart. Madonna has, with an unerring eye, picked an excellent cast of characters, and while her story is sometimes disjointed and occasionally self-indulgent, the very real and important question, the one that few have bothered to ask, is what carries the film along. No one can yet satisfactorily explain Wallis’s allure to Edward, yet, in *W.E.*, Madonna, an oft misunderstood, controversial, and boundary breaking icon herself, has sensitively portrayed, with clearly a great amount of research, a woman who was very much misunderstood through one of the greatest and most mysterious love stories of her century.

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available at: Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone # 014700092

nepalitimes.com Watch trailer

WEEKEND WEATHER

The pre-monsoon showers will hold sway over Friday and most of the weekend, and is proof that the rising moisture content in the Himalayan updrafts brought in both from the westerlies as well as circulations from the Bay. Whatever the source, the precipitation is still a result of localised condensation along the midhills. The greater cloud cover will keep the maximum temperature within 30 Celsius, while the minimum will hover in the 16-17 range. Expect the mornings to be clear with afternoon buildup.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
29-16	28-17	30-16



BIKRAM RAI

PERFECT CLICK: A tourist stops to take a picture of the Nuptse mountain in the Khumbu region, last week.



SANTOSH SHERCHAN

FORTUNATE: Agni Air crash survivor Andreas Rasch from Denmark, receives first aid near the crash site on a mountainside west of Jomsom on Monday. Rasch was one of the six survivors of the crash, 15 were killed.



ANURAG ACHARYA

ADMIT CARD PLEASE: A member of the Joint Struggle Committee of organisations representing Bahun, Chhetris and Dalits checks the examination admit card of a student to let him through Thursday’s banda at Satdobato, Kathmandu.



BIKASH DUWARE

PRETTY MAIDS IN A ROW: Kirat girls perform Sakela dance to celebrate Ubhauri festival on Sunday at Tudikhel.

Dengue fever



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Now that summer is here, it may be useful to look at what our unfriendly mosquitoes are up to, especially in spreading dengue fever. Dengue emerged from Africa during the slave trade from the 15th through 19th century and spread into Asia through commercial exchanges in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the advent of increased travel and trade in the past 50 years, the global presence of dengue is now clear.

In recent years, dengue has been widespread in the Tarai regions especially during summers. Even in Kathmandu dengue has been seen in the occasional patient.

This spread is not surprising because of two reasons: a migrant population with the disease and an abundant supply of the particular vector (carrier) mosquitoes. Due to our porous border with India, many migrant labourers (both Nepalis and Indians) with the disease enter Nepal. The vector mosquito

enjoys a blood meal from these infected patients and transmits the disease to a healthy person after a bite.

Importantly, different species of mosquitoes transmit different diseases. So the mosquito that transmits malaria will not transmit dengue. Mosquitoes that transmit dengue are called aedes, whereas it is the female anopheles which transmits



malaria. The other important vector (culex mosquito) transmits Japanese encephalitis.

The diagnosis of dengue should be strongly considered in any patient presenting fever that has developed within 14 days of even a brief trip to dengue-endemic places like Bangkok and Delhi. The dengue mosquito is generally a city

dweller, unlike the malaria mosquito which prefers a rural environment.

In most patients, dengue illness, which comprises of fever, headache, eye pain and joint aches, subsides in about a week’s time. Doctors will treat only the symptoms in dengue as there is no specific antidote.

There is, however, good news. It was believed that a second dengue infection predisposes patients to dengue haemorrhagic fever, the dreaded form of dengue; but this does not seem to be true.

For prevention, use mosquito repellents like (odomas or DEET) and wear full length clothing even during the day as dengue mosquito is a day time insect unlike the malaria mosquito which is active at night. In addition, turn over watering cans and pails after use so that the dengue mosquito does not breed in them.

As with many viral illnesses, it is hard to predict how severely the population will be affected this summer. However, it is clearly a good idea to take precautions and avoid mosquito bites.

Fooling some people all the time



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya



A new constitution may eventually be declared on 27 May but the compromised document will leave many dissatisfied

The ghosts of past failures finally disappeared and the three parties struck a deal that had been eluding them for four years. On Tuesday, the parties removed a final hurdle to broadly agree on all outstanding issues. But this agreement is driven by the sole purpose of avoiding a void on 27 May, nothing more.

In the name of a compromise, the parties have left gaping holes in the form of governance and state restructuring that have been the sticking points during negotiations. On governance, there is a fundamental divide between those who believe traditional parliamentary system did not work in Nepal because it led to instability, and those who think a directly-elected executive will solve that problem. The compromise agreed is a 'mixed model' which is going to cost this nation even more dearly in the near future.

If stability was the concern it would have made more sense to give executive powers to a

directly-elected president or prime minister and make them accountable to parliament through strong checks and balances. This was not about stability, but rather about securing the ambitions of a few men at the top. In a country like Nepal, where rulers have yet to learn how to play by the rules, the 'mixed' model will only lead to a de facto and de jure power struggle.

On state restructuring, the compromise looks even more ominous. After poring over maps, the leaders arrived at a 11-state model based on multi-ethnic identity, but the entire exercise seems futile because they do not have the numbers to back their decision in the CA.

I spoke to Prithvi Subba

Gurung who heads a cross-party caucus of Janajati lawmakers, and thinks this is a ploy to divide the Janajatis. He warned, "The leadership must not force us into an action that is going to leave everybody bitter." Even the Madhesi Front which was part of the agreement has now protested the inclusion of Jhapa, Sunsari and Morang in an eastern Tarai province, the exclusion of Chitwan from central Tarai and consolidation of Kailali and Kanchanpur into the proposed Seti-Mahakali region.

Overnight after the agreement, the 'Akhanda' movements throughout the country against large ethnic enclaves fizzled out, leading to speculation that this was all about saving electoral bastions

of influential leaders, and not really about saving Nepal. The three Tarai districts in the east have traditionally been the stronghold of the Koirala family. Chitwan is home to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, while Kailali and Kanchanpur are the constituencies of influential leaders from three parties, like Sher Bahadur Deuba, Ramesh Lekhak, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Lekh Raj Bhatta. Needless to say, all are non-Madhesi. The tacit support these leaders gave to the Brahmin and Chhetri samaj during the agitations proves this.

To be sure, besides concerns about ethnic confrontation, ordinary Bahuns and Chhetris took to the streets across the country because they had reasons to fear they would

become second-class citizens in future ethnic enclaves. "This has been one of the weaknesses of our movement, we just could not convince our fellow non-Janajati brothers and sisters that we are only claiming our own rights, not trying to take theirs away. We would never want anybody to undergo what we ourselves have suffered for so long," Gurung told me. He blames the media for demonising the indigenous movement.

It was actually the parties who used the media to polarise public opinion to increase their own bargaining positions in negotiations, and when that failed they took the dangerous gamble of polarising the streets, provoking each side to neutralise the other. These are the seeds of social unrest that could plunge the nation into another conflict, the one with no ideological or political basis and driven only by deep hatred and intolerance.

After Tuesday's agreement, one side has vacated the streets, but what happened in Dhangadi last week shows how far the leaders are prepared to go to fulfil their personal and partisan interests. Nepal's problems are far from over. ■

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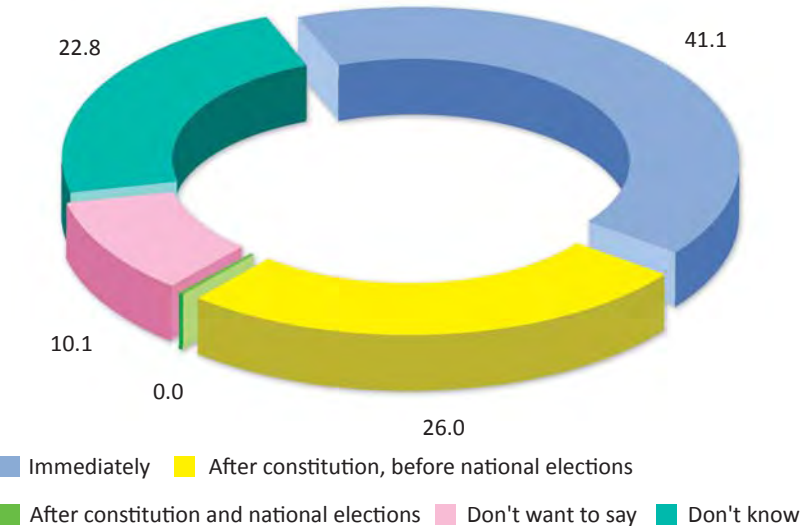
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In comparison to last three-four years, what is the state of basic services in your area?

Consolidated data	Improved	Remained same	Worsened	Don't want to say	Don't know
Local schools	68.0%	20.0%	9.8%	0.1%	2.1%
Health centres	58.1%	30.7%	8.5%	0.2%	2.5%
Drinking water	44.2%	33.7%	19.9%	0.1%	2.1%
Electricity	27.6%	28.5%	42.2%	0.1%	1.6%
Waste management	42.3%	34.0%	21.3%	0.3%	2.1%
Roads	52.0%	30.4%	16.3%	0.1%	1.1%
Services provided by VDCs and Municipalities	33.5%	43.8%	19.1%	0.4%	3.2%

Comparing your local body with and without elected representatives, when do you think local elections should be conducted?



Think nationally, act locally

The Nepali people seem to know which way they want to go, but do their leaders?



KUNDA DIXIT

The results of this year’s Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2012 that were released last week proved once more that the main concern of most Nepalis are mundane day-to-day issues like jobs, education, health, or roads. Politics figures way down on their list, and when it does, there is widespread disillusionment with politicians at the national and local levels.

But what is even more surprising is that compared to the cynicism and disenchantment in the capital with the state of the country, most Nepalis are upbeat about the future and think there have been marked improvements in development. This is borne out by statistics that show dramatic improvements in Nepal’s literacy rate, child and maternal survival and the spread of roads over the past decade.

The 3,210 respondents in 38 districts across Nepal were asked in which areas they have seen improvements. More than 61% ticked roads, showing that most Nepalis equate ‘development’ with road access. Of these, more people in the Himal (85%) than in the Pahad (50%) and Tarai (41%) felt there had been progress in roads.

In response to another question about the state of the country compared to last year, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of don’t know/ can’t say answers. People seem more outspoken, not afraid to voice their opinions, but not always to complain. Sixty per cent of respondents felt things were improving, or were

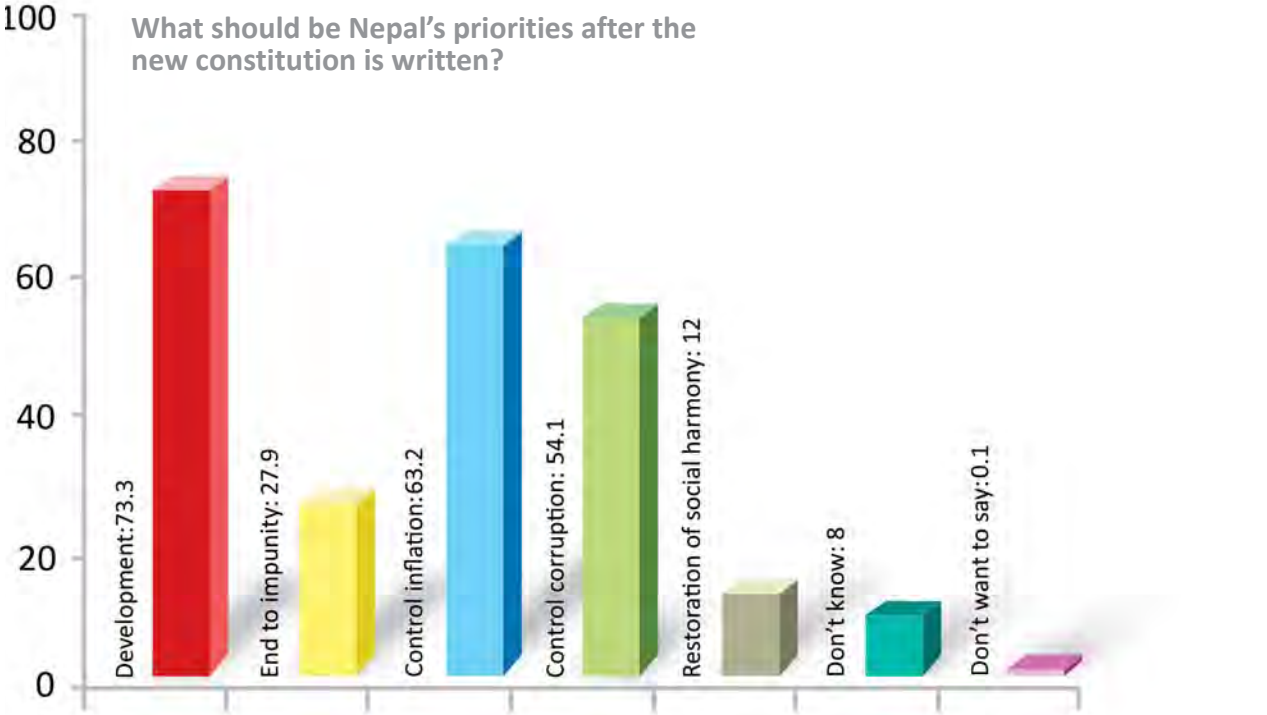
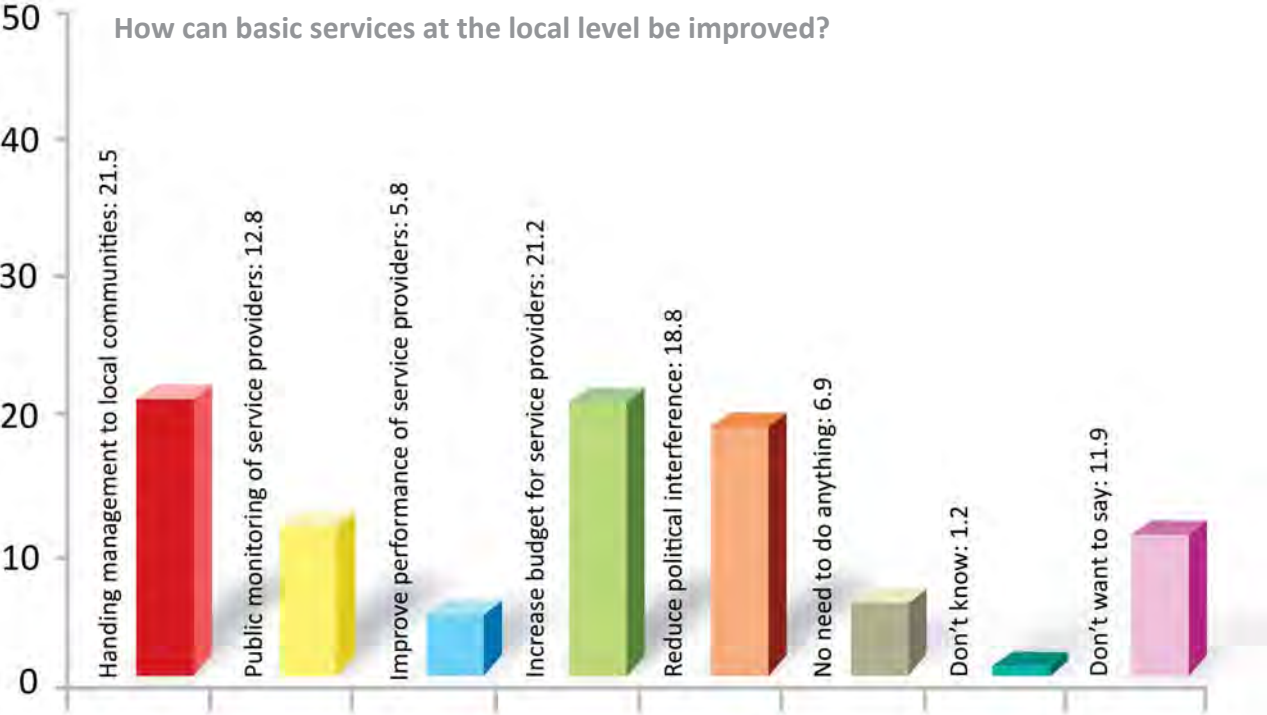
hopeful they would improve. Interestingly, more people in eastern Nepal and in the Tarai felt things were getting worse, and that they wouldn’t improve. Disaggregated data shows that more men than women felt things were getting worse as did city-dwellers, educated, hill ‘upper’ caste, Newars and Madhesis. When those who felt things were getting worse were asked who was responsible, nearly one-third blamed the Maoists and 27% felt ‘the government’ was responsible. Various ethnic groups, it was felt, were responsible for strikes and shutdowns in the poll which was conducted in the third week of April.

In all three regions and from east to west, most people thought political violence, extortion, property seizures, and crime have gone down in the past two years.

When asked to name the three main problems the country faced, more than three-fourths of the 3,210 respondents cited inflation, and more women (81%) were worried about price rises than men (71%). More among the illiterate (82.3%) felt inflation was a problem, whereas the educated ranked corruption higher. In fact, the corruption perception index rose from 56% in the Himalmedia Poll last year to 75% this year.

Asked which institutions they trusted the most, respondents still held the media in high regard both at the national and local level and felt journalists were doing an even better job than before. However, the police and civil service were not held in such high regard. At the local level more than half the respondents said their trust in local politicians had dropped in the past four years. Surprisingly, the erosion of trust of the VDC and municipalities was not as marked, with 29% thinking they were doing a better job and half saying they were the same.

There is a feeling that local service delivery has improved



across the board in health, education, roads and drinking water, but there was frustration over the lack of progress in electricity and garbage disposal. People in the west and mid-western districts were most positive about improvements in road access.

If that is the case, respondents were asked, what should be done to improve basic services? The top three answers were: hand over management to local communities (21.5%), increase

local budgets (21.2%) and remove political interference (18.8%). Asked when there should be new local elections, 41% said ‘right away’ and 26% said after the new constitution but before the general election. There seems to be an obvious correlation in the minds of people between accountable elected officials and service delivery.

Alas, at the rate things are going the people seem to have less and less respect for local leadership of the political

parties with most equating them with discredited national leaders.

These results, together with the popularity surge of Baburam Bhattarai, the plummeting support for Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the negligible endorsement for the leaders of the NC, UML and Madhesi Front, provide one big message to our leaders: work on integrity and performance, listen to the people and maybe they will vote for you in the next election. 🇳🇵

From poverty to plenty

A farmer in Kalikot leads the way into a future full of opportunities

ANURAG ACHARYA in KALIKOT



At 28, Begum Bahadur Shahi (pic, above) is already a renowned farmer and entrepreneur in Kalikot. His hard work and determination have not only made him rich, but also inspired other residents to begin commercial apple farming. Shahi's remote village in Phoi Mahadev VDC is quickly becoming an organic farming hub.

Spread across 5 hectares, Shahi's farm earns him Rs 300,000 annually. "When I was a kid, my father grew apples in our backyard," recalls Shahi and adds, "so I knew that the soil quality and rainfall pattern around the area was ideal for apple farming." At a time when locals were fleeing the conflict and seeking jobs in nearby cities like Nepalgunj and border towns in India, Shahi left his school in Surkhet and moved back to his village in 2001.

Shahi began with 700 saplings brought from India's Himachal Pradesh under the district agricultural program. Three years later he added another 500 saplings and was selling apples in district headquarter Manma and neighbouring Jumla. Back then there were no road networks and the nearest market town in Surkhet was two or three days walk away. Shahi's profits were limited, but he did not give up.

In 2004 he hired three locals from the village and opened up Begum Nursery and Fruits Processing Centre. Besides selling apples, he started grafting saplings and training villagers in apple farming. In order to increase the value of his product, Shahi also taught himself how to make and package apple candies, juice

and jam. These methods allowed him to store products for a longer time, and doubled his profits. "If there was better connectivity to other towns and villages, I could triple my profit," claims Shahi, who earned a national award for exceptional farm management in 2007.

Shahi's achievement is even more remarkable given that Kalikot's arid climate barely allows farmers to grow enough food for a few months. The district suffers chronic food deficit and families are forced to find alternative means of sustenance. Thousands of men flock to Indian towns few months every year in search of jobs, but only the lucky ones manage to earn enough to bring back home, while many others are deceived by their employees. "After months of back breaking labour, my contractor refused to pay me. I was heartbroken," recounts Man Bahadur Buda who was cheated three months worth of wage.

The onset of peace and construction of Karnali highway have given people a reason to hope. In recent years, farmers in the district have made healthy incomes by growing apples, mushrooms, herbs and tea organically. Agriculture expert Chuman Singh Giri believes that with practical irrigation schemes like rain water harvesting, most farmlands in Kalikot can be irrigated even in drought. And if more farmers can replicate Shahi's example, it could even reverse the economic dynamics of the region.

Kalikot is overcoming its past, and although its journey from pitiful to plenty may have just begun, with pioneering entrepreneurs like Shahi, the prospects will only get brighter. ■



PICS:DAO/KALIKOT

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Never to return

Durga Prasad Sharma,
Nepal Samacharpatra, 11 May

संसार

Rupa had just called her husband Dil Bahadur BK who worked in Saudi Arabia as a carpenter for a construction company. Dil Bahadur had promised to call her back in a few hours, but that conversation turned out to be their last one. BK whose home is in Parbat district died in a workplace accident on 23 April. He had been working as a labourer in Qatar and Saudi Arabia for the last eight years. Although his fellow workers contacted his family and informed them about the tragedy, the company has not

contacted Rupa yet.

BK's body has been lying in a morgue at a local hospital in Saudi Arabia's Taif city for the last three weeks. Since his family did not have money to bring back the body for last rites, they approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the manpower company which sent BK to Saudi Arabia for help. But so far neither the government nor the agency has responded. Already buried in debt, the death of the sole bread earner has made the family's life more difficult. "He was our only hope. How are we supposed to send his children to school and take care of them?" lamented BK's elderly mother, Nanda Kali.



Dilip Poudel, *Nagarik*, 14 May

नागरिक

Khungaki Devi Gharti of Baglung was happy to undergo heart treatment at the first ever free health camp in Burtiawang VDC. 2,952 people from 18 VDCs received free treatment and medicines at the event jointly organised by the district health administration, Dhulikhel Hospital and Swan Nepal.

Heart of gold

Doctors had prescribed Gharti, a long time heart patient, a monthly dose of Benthazin injection, but she was unable to take the drug because of her financial status. On Saturday, not only did she get a free dose, but the district health office also promised to pay for her monthly treatment.

Along with 44 health personnel, eight doctors specialising in heart conditions, ENT, skin diseases, gynaecology, paediatrics, ophthalmology and dental problems were involved in the camp.

According to senior public health specialist Sagar Dahal, around 300 types of medicines were distributed to hundreds of women and children. The camp was especially beneficial for women suffering from uterine prolapse for a long time. The doctors operated on 38 women at the camp, while five patients who needed further medical attention were taken to Dhulikhel Hospital.

"If only the land I call home would shelter me"

Devendra Bhattarai and Dinesh Regmi, *Kantipur*, 13 May

कान्तिपुर

Devendra Dhakal is a farmer and he ploughs fields all day long in a remote border town between Qatar and Bahrain. Every time he meets a recent arrival from Nepal he asks the same question, "Will the constitution be drafted this time?"

Cheated by manpower agents, Dhakal who hails from Gorkha has been forced to work illegally for the last five years. But the 39-year-old worries more about his country than the pain he endures in this distant land. "No matter how much I toil in this desert, every

night I dream about my village, the green forests and the day when the constitution will be drafted," says Dhakal who believes there will be more jobs once the statute is written and is hopeful people like him can return back to earn a decent living.

Like Dhakal, Bir Bahadur Buda of Dang who has been herding sheep for the last nine years is also confident that things will change for them soon. "We have heard that monarchy was abolished and the nation is now a democratic republic. If we go back, our lives will be much better," says the 58-year-old who has spent 24 years away from home working in various Gulf

countries.

Basiuddin Musalman of Lumbini says he left Nepal because he was not recognised as a citizen and is currently living and working in Jamelia as an illegal immigrant. He laments, "If only the place I call home would shelter me, I would not spend another day here."

Many other workers like Chetman Rai of Dharan, Ram Balak Mandal of Mahottari, Chhaya Chandra Ghimire of Syangja and Madan Shiris of Baglung who are toiling in various cities across the Middle East are eagerly waiting for the new constitution to be written so that they can come home to their families.



RSS

Driving the economy

Yogesh Khatiwada, *Kantipur*, 12 May

कान्तिपुर

Nepal's transportation sector has been hit hard by frequent strikes, fuel shortages and lack of security and business owners are being forced to seek out alternatives. FNCCI, the umbrella organisation of business houses in Nepal said in a recent press release that the country is losing over a billion rupees due to bandas. Night buses have suffered the most, because people are wary of travelling long distances when they are not sure if they will reach their destination or return on time. Sometimes passengers even cancel tickets if they hear rumours about band.

Businessmen are bitter at parties and other groups for using the streets as battle ground and targeting vehicles. Head of Transport Association, Yogendra Nath Karmacharya says banks have started blacklisting transportation companies because they have not been able to pay regular instalments on bank loans. "How do we pay back our loans when there is a band every day? People avoid travelling in public transport and business is down," says Karmacharya.



Go ahead, strike

What are you waiting for?
Strike back.

नागरिक Rajesh KC in *Nagarik*, 15 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"The executive powers will remain with the cabinet, but if they make a mistake, the ceremonial president may exercise direct control."

Deputy Prime Minister Krishna Sitaula
quoted in *Kantipur*, 16 May.

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The “F” word

It was bound to come to this. The Baidya Kaka faction of the Baddies has finally decided to take the plunge and use the “F” word against the Gang of Three Baburam-Prachanda-Prakash Clique. It has called them “fascist” for the first time. Not only that, it urged Jhusil Koirala to head a kangresi-led coalition post-27 May, and accused Chairman Awesome of having “dictatorial tendencies”. Hey, isn’t this supposed to be the hardcore faction?

Chairman Awesome has always been well known for speaking through both sides of his mouth, depending on who his audience is. He has been caught on candid camera doing this so often, one would think he’d have learnt his lesson

not to blabber away. The latest was his exhortation to the Janajati Caucus “to take to the streets” to put pressure on the NC-UML to agree to their demands on federalismo. He is supposed to have told the activists:

“I tried my best, but I just couldn’t get the kangresi to agree.” And a few hours later he was back at the three-party meeting in Balu Water where he said that under no circumstances should the far-west be divided, or the three districts in the east made a part of Limbuwan. Comrade Chhabil Bajje is showing that he is as clever a politician as he was a guerrilla leader: he doesn’t want to alienate the Bahun Chhetri vote bank. By now, he has got pretty much what he wants with

the consensus on directly-elected executive president, so he doesn’t really care what happens to the rest of the constitution.

Awesome has often compared himself to the Buddha and Gandhi, both of whom he has described as “peaceful revolutionaries” like himself. We will let the Buddha decide what PKD can do to attain nirvana, but a keen Nepal watcher told the Ass he thought the Great Leader may think he is like Bapu because he considers himself a “Gun-dhian”?

The parties came up with a deal to carve the country into 11 provinces,

and from the looks of it they have just rearranged the jig saw pieces a little bit from the current Anchals. And they fought a war for this? On top of it, no one is happy. Brahmins are on warpath even though the deal was done between the all-Brahmin leadership of the parties, the Madhesis are up in arms about getting a Tarai chopped up into little pieces, the Janajatis don’t agree with the names and boundaries, the Tharus feel cheated. The Newars are about to organise a motorcycle rally. So they have all called for indefinite and overlapping bunds. There are days in the next two weeks where there are multiple bunds simultaneously happening on the same day. And this just in: even jailbirds want to be freed after 27 May and if their demands are not met, they have announced a phasewise protest.

The Janajati Caucus is a bit of a

misnomer because as far as I know it is made up solely of non-Janai wearing non-Caucasians.

The Supreme Court has cleared Ex-Minister for Abduction and Extortion, Shyam Sunder Gupta, to vote in the CA. For the first time in the history of this nation, a legally certified criminal will be legislating from behind bars. Can’t wait for the day when Chakre Milan will be running the PMO from Nakhhu Jail.

When ex-mayor Ketchup Sthapit says he wants to turn Kathmandu into a “sexy city” in five years, we hope he doesn’t want to make Thamel even more like Patpong, Pokhara like Pattaya, or turn Surkhet into Phuket?