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# ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

It has been ten years since the country's VDCs, DDCs and municipalities have remained without elected representatives. That is ten years too long.

The Maoists get a lot of blame for demolishing local democracy in this country by systematically targeting elected village and district councillors and bombing most VDC and DDC buildings during the war. But equally, if not more, destructive was the NC government in 2002 led by Sher Bahadur Deuba postponing local elections just because it didn't want the opposition UML to continue its dominance in local bodies. This created a vacuum in the villages which the Maoists easily filled with their terror-based approach to garnering local support.

Today, the constitution-writing process is derailed, we have no national parliament, the country is being ruled by a government that has outlived its mandate, it is led by a lame duck prime minister and a ceremonial president. If anyone were out to sabotage governance in this country, they couldn't have done a better job.

There is a deadline for constitutional amendment on 22 July which is most certainly not going to be met. Chances of elections for a new Constituent Assembly by November are slim which may not be altogether a bad thing. But what we need much more urgently is a functional parliament to get this country back on its feet. A new CA is just going to be another expensive dead-end, and too fraught for the fragile polity to handle. Even more outlandish is the proposal floated by those arrayed against the prime minister, to resurrect the old CA. As if that would resolve anything.

But there is one move that is doable and could, in a manner of speaking, kill a lot of birds with one stone: holding local elections. This would help untangle the hopelessly knotted politics, end this paralysing uncertainty, kick start local development, and get the



**All the big parties are reluctant to go for local elections because they are afraid of facing the people whom they have misled for so long**

country moving again. Given the current legal limbo, local elections would be the most constitutionally kosher thing to do.

This year's Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey in May showed extreme dissatisfaction among people about the prolonged absence of democracy, especially at the local level. The absence of elected local representatives has not only stalled development, it has bred corruption because VDCs and DDCs are run like three-party dictatorships. Asked when there should be new local elections, 41 per cent of respondents said 'right away' and 26 per cent said after the new constitution, but before the general election. This reaffirms the public perception that only grassroots democracy can deliver development services.

If there was one thing that worked in Nepal since 1990, it was grassroots democracy. It empowered elected village leaders to focus on the health, education and welfare of their constituents and allowed them to be re-elected based on performance. The councils could have been more inclusive, but as education levels improved, that would have happened.

At the village or district level, it doesn't really matter which party a candidate belongs to, as the best and most honest managers get the job so they can improve people's lives. In the absence of elected municipal councils, Nepal's cities are bursting at the seams with unplanned growth, crumbling infrastructure, mountains of garbage, and rivers that have turned into sewers. But all the big parties are reluctant to go for local elections because they are afraid of facing the people whom they have misled for so long.

National politics is a mess and hopelessly stuck. While we wait for party leaders to get their act together, the least they can do is fulfil the people's aspiration for representational local government.

## ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

### CAUTION: CHILDREN AT WORK

Political transition can no longer be an excuse for the criminal neglect of children in Nepal ('Caution: children at work', editorial, #611). Unfortunately, it is also the lack of political will and focus that has led to child labour and all other forms of exploitation of Nepal's marginalised. Laws alone will not save the children as long as there is no government worth its name.

**Jimmy**

- Child labour is the symptom of a problem, not the cause. The cause is a structural deficiency that leads to poor governance which in turn affects every aspect of development in the country. Fix the structure and child labour as well as the solutions to other problems like unsafe drinking water, trafficking, energy and water shortages, the appalling pollution in the Bagmati will fall into place.

**Kirsten**

### CHEATED OF THEIR CHILDHOOD

It's one thing for children to help earn money for family expenses and another to risk their lives performing dangerous and grueling work ('Cheated of their childhood', Bhrikuti Rai, #611). Children's education is sacrificed as a result. When will people realise that the key to getting out of the poverty cycle is education? With better education, children can get better-paid jobs in the future. If the cost of

education can be subsidised, it might be easier to get children out of the workforce and back to school.

**CN**

- I come from Singapore where child labour is illegal and strict punishments are meted out to offenders. Therefore it is devastating to read about the severity of child labour in Nepal. Childhood is the best time to learn and explore about the world. But thousands of Nepali children are slogging and missing out on the most crucial part of their lives. Unless leaders are willing to take a firm stand to solve widespread poverty, which will eventually put an end to child labour, nothing is going to change.

**SC**

### SOLDIERING ON

I am saddened to read about the state of senior Gurkhas living in the UK ('Soldiering on', Badri Paudyal, #611). But many elderly people in Nepal are treated horribly by their families, discarded on the streets and left to survive on their own. Having said that, I still feel it's far better for them to stay in Nepal, because I can't even imagine how they are coping in a completely new environment in their old age.

**SL**

- A Gurkha soldier spends the best part of his life serving in the army far from his family and when it's time for retirement and reunion with his children and wife, he has to live alone again. It's time the British government reconsidered the pension and benefits

it provides elderly Gurkhas. Also the current residency rules result in a lot of social and psychological damage to family members.

**Kale**

- I think the condition of Gurkha families living abroad is slowly improving. Nowadays most children of ex-servicemen also reside in the UK and have better access to public schools and universities which are free. Although the older retirees are not provided housing and pension that are equal to British veterans, but in time things will be fine and Britain will be a little Nepal.

**Bijay Limbu**

- The article does a good job explaining the troubles of elderly Gurkhas. But asking the British government to bring more kin sounds like a case of 'give them a finger, and they'll take the whole hand'. It would be best for Gurkhas to be provided pension which is on par with their British counterparts so that they can return home to their families.

**Student**

- There is a lot of misinformation surrounding residency rights and benefits. Many Gurkha veterans think they will get homes and social services immediately after they arrive in the UK. But the process is painfully slow and many families have to live off the little money they bought from Nepal. As far as translation is concerned, the National

Health Service, Citizens Advice Bureau and the city council employ Nepalis for translation purposes and Gurkhas who don't speak English should make use of this free service.

**G Gurung**

- As a doctor working in the UK, I am aware Nepalis want to cause as less fuss as possible, and would rather suffer silently. But the British government provides translators for free to anyone who does not speak English in hospitals, courts and public institutions. Doctors themselves make every effort to understand their patients as much as possible. I have patients who don't speak English and when I don't understand them, I call the translation services. I also use google translate, which is an excellent option if the patient is able to type on a computer. The UK is one of the most 'giving' states in the world.

**M Budhathoki**

- Paudyal's article is unbalanced and he is misleading readers. He only talks about a few struggling families, but most Gurkhas are happy, content and leading comfortable lives in the UK.

**Bhim Gurung**

- Unlike in Nepal, Nepalis in the UK are lagging behind not because they are incompetent, but because they are deliberately kept behind. The environment in the British army is such that Nepalis don't or can't complete their education and have

a very hard time moving up the army ranks.

**Who cares**

### CARETAKER

Immediately after Bhattarai came to office, there was a great deal of hope and jubilation among Nepalis ('Taking care of the caretaker', Anurag Acharya, #611). We deserve 'leaders' like him for our lack of common sense and political judgement. Fortunately, much of that euphoria has died down. An inherently bad person cannot do good politics forever and like a proud peacock, the PM's true colour has finally come out. But columnists like Acharya have not learnt their lessons and want us to believe Bhattarai is our saviour. We need to remind our dear leader about the extent of damage, disrepute and backwardness he has brought to the country and then oust him through a farmers' revolt.

**Ushaft**

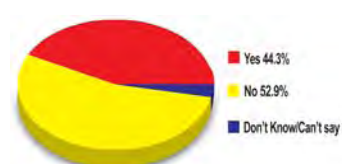
Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #612

Q. Should Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai step down immediately?

Total votes: 2,931



Weekly Internet Poll # 613. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the most viable option out of the present deadlock?





THIS IS IT  
Rubeena Mahato

It's not that our politicians don't know how much people hate them, they must sense it. But they just choose to do nothing about it because they know it doesn't really make much of a difference.

In a real democracy, elections could fix that. Only those who show integrity and promise would be elected, the crooks would be ousted, and that would be that. But our ruling class knows there are other ways to get themselves elected: cheating, intimidation or ethnic politics.

Voters are disillusioned and have lost confidence in elections because just about everyone is tainted, and it's just a matter of choosing between equally rotten alternatives. Our leaders may not be sure about a lot of things but they are convinced of their indispensability. And the one thing that brings them together is a collective fear of facing voters.

The death of the CA was tragic, but some party bosses are now proposing to revive it just because they have cold feet about 22 November. Nepalis have had enough of that circus already. This is the same CA that failed to do its job despite repeated extensions. What has changed, that it will deliver this time?

Besides, by whose authority do the leaders hope to reinstate the CA? We don't have a parliament, the president is ceremonial and the PM is a caretaker. There is a constitutional void but that isn't an excuse to run this country like a banana republic.

Prime Minister Bhattarai didn't have good intentions when he set out to dissolve the CA and unilaterally announce the elections, but that should not mean parties committed to democratic practice should also refuse to contest polls and call it a "Maoist trap". The NC and UML will risk losing whatever little credibility they have if they keep opposing elections and avoid going to the people.

By now the NC and UML have had enough time to figure out what useful



BIKRAM RAI

# A democratic jolt

The NC and UML are dominated by failed and ageing alpha males from the past, it's time to make a clean break

idiots they have been to the Maoist plan. They stopped being agenda setters long ago, they have been reactive and have taken the back seat in politics. Most of their leaders are either corrupt, incompetent or uninspirational. Forget vision, they can't even organise a rent-a-crowd rally in Kathmandu. If these are the guys supposed to defend democracy, then democracy in Nepal doesn't need enemies.

A massive ideological and structural overhaul of both parties is long overdue. An election would focus their minds, force them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and forge a strong democratic alliance to face elections.

If elections don't turn up good candidates, we don't boycott them. We try and build a system that will push good candidates to the process. The NC and UML complain that the Maoists are trying to drag the country towards a

one-party dictatorship.

Perhaps it's time they go to the next election with young, dynamic and forward-thinking leaders who will reclaim the progressive agenda from the radicals. And perhaps it's also time youth leaders stop whining and take initiative instead of begging the old men to hand them power.

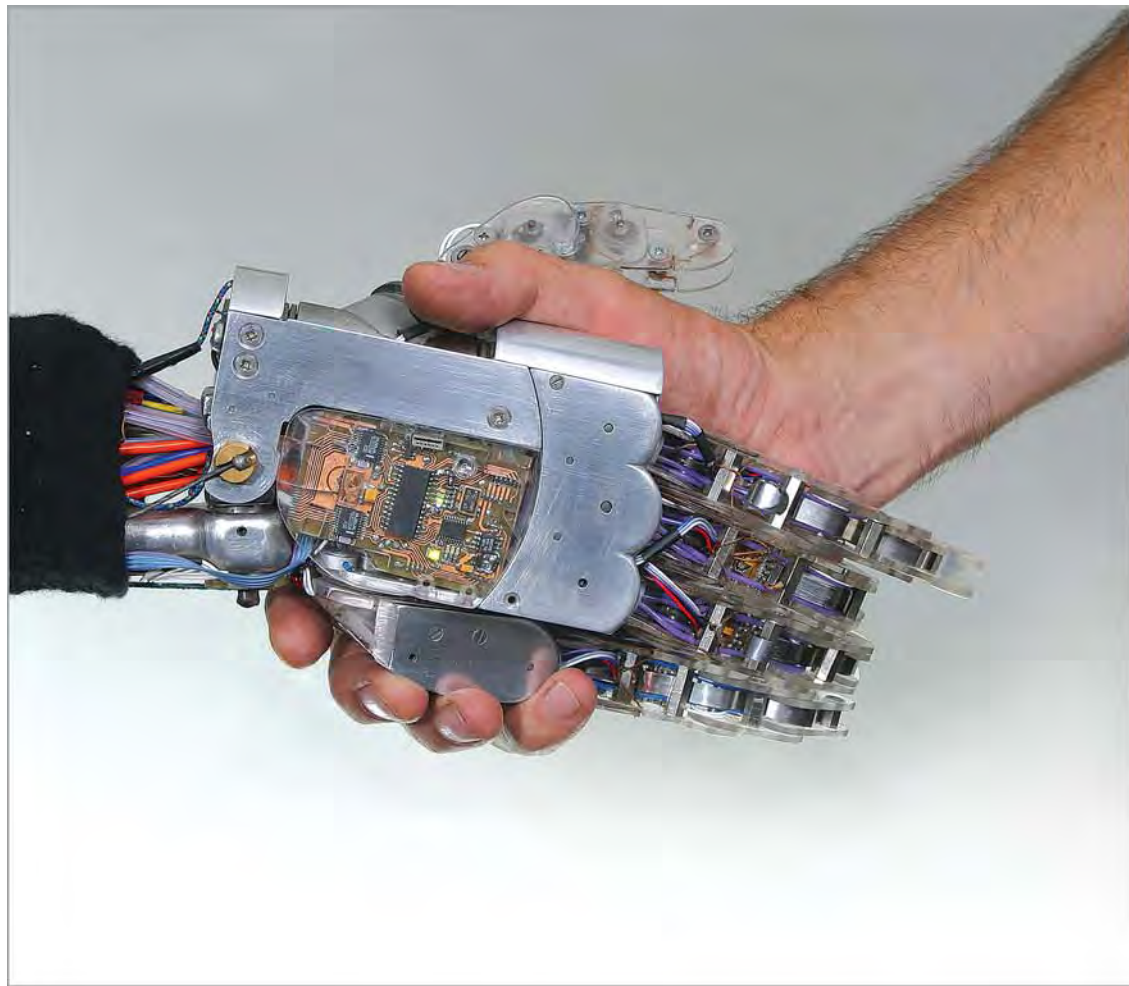
What the people don't want to see are the same old Sushil Koiralas, Sher Bahadur Deubas, Ram Chandra Paudels, Jhal Nath Khanals, Madhav Kumar Nepals, or KP Olis. The two parties are dominated by failed and ageing alpha males from the past, it's time to make a clean break.

A CA election may not solve our problems, but the demand for a constitution through a CA is so powerful and longstanding that any attempt to declare a constitution through other means will just radicalise positions. A

better solution would be to hold national and local elections and then have the parliament pick up where we left off on the constitution from the earlier CA.

Local bodies have been without people's representatives for ten years now. There is no presence of the state in many parts of the country, local governance is in shambles. In the absence of the parliament, the caretaker government has grown inordinately powerful. The prime minister thinks he can not just bring a full budget through ordinance but run the entire country from Baluwatar. Unfortunately, the opposition is only making him stronger by obstructing elections and not coming up with their own alternatives.

The only way forward is to resolve the acute democratic deficit in the country through local and national elections. And the first step towards that is to form a national government. 🇳🇵



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BIKRAM RAI



BIKRAM RAI

# Wire(less) below Everest

## Bridging the digital divide in the high Himalaya

BHRIKUTI RAI in KHUMBU

As a student, Adam Steiner went on the Gokyo trek 15 years ago, and remembers being completely incommunicado from his family and friends for the three weeks he was up in the mountains.

This spring, he returned to Everest Base Camp and was surprised to find 3G mobile phones and cyber cafes all the way from Namche to Gorakshap.

"It's incredible, pretty soon there is going to be no point on earth without phones and the Net," he said.

While the mountains look the same, (except perhaps for the receding glaciers) Namche has turned into a bustling modern town. But what is completely new is the sight of porters talking on their mobiles or listening to music blaring from their cell phone speakers while they haul 40 kg of mountaineering gear on their backs.

In the last two years the mobile

penetration rate across the 75 districts of Nepal has increased from 32 to 55 per cent. Mobile telephony has been able to leap frog the digital divide and bypass the restrictions of landlines. With mobile phones, the Internet penetration rate in Nepal has also increased from 6 per cent two years ago to 18 per cent now.

The biggest private mobile company, Ncell, set up a 3G base station for broadband mobile communication at 5,200 metres at Gorakshap near Everest Base Camp in 2010. Eight other base stations have been installed in the Everest

region which has changed the way locals interact with each other.

"We have had video conferencing up to the second camp on Everest through Ncell 3G," says Laxman Adhikari, a climate researcher at the Pyramid International Observatory in Lobuje.

While telecom firms have recently begun expanding their base stations in the higher areas like Khumbu, many companies have been providing satellite solutions to expedition groups and hotels in the area for almost a decade now.

The most popular are satellite phones that are sold in Nepal by Thuraya and bypass domestic networks and go directly to satellite. Thuraya's handsets are now so small they look indistinguishable from cell phones.

STM Gramintel provides VSAT (very small aperture terminal) connections to a growing clientele in Solu Khumbu and other far flung districts such as Taplejung, Mustang and Jajarkot since 2004 with Internet bandwidth up to 512 kbps in the Khumbu region. Binaya Dhungel of Gramintel says his company is helping the Ministry of Health and Population set up telemedicine centres at 26 district hospitals.

VSAT receives/transmits signals from terminals installed at dispersed sites connecting to a central hub via Satellite using small diameter antenna dishes. The technology is now increasingly popular among hotel and lodges in the region as

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- 1 Ncell launched 3G services at Kala Pathar (5,675 m) in 2010
- 2 A satellite dish at a hotel in Lobuje
- 3 A porter talks on a mobile phone on his way to Namche
- 4 Internet rates pinned on the notice board of a hotel in Lobuje.

trekkers look for connectivity even at the wilderness of the Himalaya. The higher you go up the mountain, the higher the price of the internet at the trekking lodges. Alpine Inn in Lobuje provides wifi Internet to its guests at Rs 1000 per hour. But given that their monthly cost for Internet during tourist season is Rs 20,000, the inn barely breaks even. So why do they do it? “We make our money from the food and drinks they buy here, and they come because of the Internet,” explains Mingma Tsering Sherpa of Alpine Inn. But with smart phones and mobile Internet, cyber cafes are starting to lose business. Tseten Sherpa of Sherpa Internet Café at Dingboche says that the business

has gone down over the years due to the use of Internet through mobile phones. “Mobile phones now work even as high as Gorakshep and the base camp so we are virtually out of business,” says Tseten. There is a mismatch between the VSAT rentals and cheaper mobile Internet, so people like Tseten and Mingma see the Internet as an unviable business. “The solar panels don’t always work and we have to use generators which guzzle petrol that we buy at Rs 650 per litre,” says Tseten. Despite this, the Internet boom is impacting not just tourism but health and education in the Khumbu. Khumjung High School, one of many schools established by Edmund Hillary, has computer classes and will be expanding the existing wireless Internet connection later this year. “Although computer education isn’t compulsory here, interested students in sixth grade and above attend computer classes after school,” says principal Mahendra Kathet. He hopes that with Internet accessibility, which has been made easier and affordable through Nepal Telecom’s ADSL landline connection, students in Khumjung won’t be left behind their city peers. Khunde Hospital has also benefited from the Internet because doctors there regularly use telemedicine to consult specialists in Kathmandu and abroad. Eliza Bajracharya, physician at Khunde Hospital told *Nepali Times*: “The Internet has transformed the way we do work. It also allows us to keep in touch with our families and this makes us feel less like we are in a remote area.”

nepalitimes.com

Upwardly mobile, #583  
Beyond the digital divide, #392



# Empowering technology

Mahabir Pun’s Nepal Wireless Project put Nepal on the map of the Internet’s global village, but he is not resting on his laurels. After connecting 15 remote districts with telemedicine and computer education, the project is now working with Worldlink Communications to develop and extend Internet network in rural areas. Pun, who is a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, believes that unless technology is used to empower local people by uplifting their socio-economic conditions, its transformative power will go to waste. “The Internet is more than a tool, it is a necessity and offers rural areas the chance to catch up with the city,” Pun told *Nepali Times*. Worldlink will provide Internet access to rural schools and health centres at minimal cost to help develop social infrastructure, and transform access to communication in rural Nepal. [www.nepalwireless.net](http://www.nepalwireless.net)

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# Picking up the pieces after war

A novel shelter is helping children orphaned and injured during the conflict to rebuild their lives

SUNIR PANDEY

Nepal's war may be over, but it has left behind orphans. The conflict also wrecked the economy, and families are unable to take care of children. The injured have

nowhere to go to get treatment. The state is preoccupied with heftier issues.

Into this fray have stepped in many charities to help the most vulnerable sections of society. And one of them is in Sankhu on the Valley's eastern edge, far from the chaos of the city, a shelter for

war orphans, abandoned, sick and injured children. Hamro Gaun Eco Village educates the children, nurses them back to health, provides psycho-social counseling and re-integrates them back into society.

"The children come from extremely difficult and

unfortunate backgrounds. Many of them are orphans whose parents were killed during the insurgency by the state and the rebels, but no one is going around saying 'your side killed my father'," says René Veldt, a Dutch national.

Veldt started the shelter in

2006 with support from the Dutch aid group, Stichting Veldwerk, to help Nepali children in a small way. He admits the scale of the problem is much larger, and his work is just a drop in the ocean.

Birkha is from Kalikot and was found in Bir Hospital taking



SCHOOL TIME: Khum (on crutches) with Pemba (on his left) and classmates at Evergreen English School.



PICS: ROBIN GIRI

# Latrines

Community helps its poorer households to ensure sanitation and save children's lives in rural Nepal

ROBIN GIRI in DANG

News items that yet another district has been declared 'Open Defecation Free' prompt many readers in Nepal's cities to snigger, but behind the headlines are stories of generosity and courage of rural communities.

Having toilets or not makes the difference between life and death for tens of thousands of children in rural Nepal. Only 43 per cent of households in the country have latrines.

A simple gesture on the part of a village elder to help build a toilet for his





PICS: SUNIR PANDEY

care of his elder brother who was injured in a landmine, just days after the government declared Nepal ‘mine free’. Birkha is now attending school, and taking care of his brother.

The shelter is managed by Bal Kshetra Nepal (BKN) and takes care of 42 children from all over Nepal. Parmesh Malla who is in charge, says many of the children show post-traumatic stress from having witnessed violence during the war. “They have severe behavioural and emotional problems for which we don’t have enough resources to take care of,” says Malla, “but despite that the children are coping well. They are very resilient and get a lot of support from other children around them.” The teenagers are now growing into young adults and are finding jobs, getting married and starting families.

Pemba Tsering Tamang was

11 when he was found living in a hovel infested with rats in Jorpati. Pemba was being taken care of by his 15-year-old brother who worked as a carpet weaver. Underfed and neglected, he was critically ill with bone tuberculosis. BKN took him to the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) in Banepa where he spent months recuperating. Pemba can now walk on his own, although he still needs to wear a brace under his shirt.

“He wants to be an artist when he grows up,” confides one of Pemba’s friends. Shy but unable to hide his smile, Pemba whispers to his caretaker that he actually wants to be a doctor.

Khum Bahadur Pandey from Baglung is another disabled member of Hamro Gaun family who dreams of becoming a

doctor. Suffering from what appeared to be polio, he was admitted to HRDC by Bal Kshetra staff. Today, he walks on crutches and is fond of dancing with his friends. His progress in school has been so encouraging that HRDC started a fund in his name to help with his college education.

However, not all the children are lucky. Orphans and children who cannot locate or identify their parents find themselves in a precarious position. Without at least one parent and a permanent address, they can’t apply for citizenship and are in danger of living without mothers and a motherland.

Pemba, who wants to be a doctor and maybe also an artist, can’t get admitted into a university without citizenship. His brother is married, but not in contact anymore and nobody knows who his parents are. 📷

## Safety first

When René Veldt (*pic, right*) built Hamro Gaun, fire and earthquake safety was on top of his list. Each of the three building is equipped with fire-extinguishers and at least two water hoses. Buckets of sand and water can be found on every floor. Veldt has also put in place an earthquake warning system that emits an alarm at least 30 seconds prior to the actual quake. The children at the orphanage are taught earthquake safety tips and undergo regular preparedness drills.

“Most Kathmandu houses will fall like dominoes when an earthquake hits. All state institutions – the police, the army, the bureaucracy are housed in unsafe buildings, the ones who are supposed to provide relief will themselves be paralysed,” says Veldt about the Valley’s lack of preparedness. Hamro Gaun stores tents, food, medical and sanitary supplies to last at least a week. “Other Sankhu residents will probably come to us for help,” says Veldt.



Along with safety, Hamro Gaun is a model for energy efficiency and is a self-sustaining home. The shelter has a solar panel that keeps all buildings brightly lit at night while the surrounding villages are in darkness during power cuts. Fruits and vegetables for the children and staff are gathered from the organic garden found in the premises, and all this is cooked in biogas generated from the shelter’s waste.

# save lives

poor and blind neighbour has now grown into a massive campaign in Dang that has helped build more than 2,300 household latrines in VDCs here.

The ‘Aligning for Action to Make Diarrhoea History’ campaign was launched in the aftermath of an outbreak of diarrhoea in this mid-western district in 2008 that claimed 88 lives. Health officials and the development community wanted to avert another epidemic that claimed the lives of mainly children under five.

Part of a multi-sector initiative to help prevent recurring outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases in western Nepal, UNICEF and partners worked on a strategy that sought to solve the problems at the source, rather than treat the symptoms.

Building on earlier successes of school and community-led campaigns on sanitation and hygiene, UNICEF and communities worked with school children, teachers and local leaders to hammer home the message that open defecation was killing their children.

The elders of Saudiyar VDC

in Dang, including schools in the catchment areas, took ownership of the campaign. Volunteers (ominously called ‘Commandos’) did a head count and mapped the poorest community members who could not afford to build a toilet.

They set a target date by which every home should have a toilet. Then they issued the call for Danbirs or ‘Heroes of Generosity’ from within the community willing to donate material and resources to their poorer neighbours. At a grand community function, they pledged help while others volunteered labour.

“Most people are looking for charity from strangers, but they are embarrassed to accept charity from their own neighbours,” says Hari Ghimire, chairperson of the Open Defecation Free campaign and Drinking Water committee.

Maya Devi (*pic, right*) and her family were one such example. When the Commandos told her about building a toilet, she replied that she couldn’t afford it. “When I told my husband that we could get materials to build our toilet from our neighbours, my husband was



embarrassed,” she recounts. Out of pride, Maya Devi’s husband and two sons bought used bricks and borrowed money to buy building material and built their toilet within a week. This simple strategy struck a chord with the community, and eventually it was only the poorest households like that of Dharma Das Chaudhary (*pic, left*) who sought help from the Danbirs.

“I always wanted a toilet, but I couldn’t afford it,” says Chaudhary, a blind and unemployed former carpenter.

“I am really thankful to the heroes of generosity in my village.”

Saudiyar VDC is the first village in Dang district where all residents have a ‘pukka’ or permanent toilet. Just twenty years ago, there wasn’t a single toilet in the village, and the community now knows that latrines save lives. 📷



## EVENTS



**RATNA PARK EXHIBITION,** photographers Rohan Thapa and Lucas Pernin come together to present Ratnapark and its significance to Kathmandu and Kathmanduites alike. 2 to 8 July, 10am to 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 4220735

**Baki Prista,** a play about villagers caught between crossfire during the civil war. Rs 100 and Rs 50 for students, 4 to 21 July, 5.30 pm onwards, Sarvanam Theatre, Kalikasthan



**FUTSAL CARNIVAL,** enjoy a fun-filled fair as you cheer for your favourite futsal team, dance to the music of DJ Phuchhey and savour delicious snacks from the food stalls. 28 July, 11am to 7pm, Grassroots Recreational Centre, Mandikatar

**Highway,** a charity show of the highly acclaimed movie by Gari Khana Deu. 8 July, 6.30 pm, Kumari Hall, Kamal Pokhari, 9808886949, 4464616

**Ah Wilderness!**, a family comedy written by Nobel Prize winner Eugene O'Neill and directed by Deborah Merola. Rs 200 (for adults) and Rs 100 (for students), 14 to 15 July, 3pm, Vajra Hotel, Swayambhu

**Demystifying Portraiture,** a workshop by Spanish photographer Arantxa Cedillo for photography enthusiasts who want to meet people and tell their stories through portraits. 21 to 22 July and 28 to 29 July, 9am to 3pm, Jhamsikhel,

## MUSIC



**NEPFEST III,** don't miss this open band competition where the winners get a chance to perform with Polish band Decapitated. Rs 100, 25 August, Bhrikutimandap, Fun Park, Kathmandu

**Albatross Unplugged,** catch the live performance of Albatross for a musical Friday evening. Rs 100, 6 July, 5.45 pm onwards, Backyard Foodjoint and Pub, Jhamsikhel

**Live Music Night,** Shabnam and Cannabiz band playing every Wednesday. Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex

## DINING

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



**GHANGRI CAFE,** a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Pulchok

**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

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



**CHOPSTIX,** savory Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken; it is one-of-a-kind. Kumaripati, 5551118

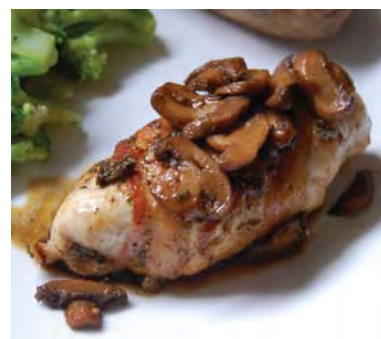
**Tamarind,** a multi-cuisine restaurant, offers a decent range of drinks and food. Jhamsikhel

**Milk Coffee & Cocktail Cafe,** 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

**Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar,** the outdoor dining area invokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. While they serve a plethora of dishes, it is the Indian food they pride themselves on. Thamel, 4701170



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



**NEW ORLEANS,** offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. We got hooked on the rosemary chicken and hamburgers. Jhamsikhel, 5522708



**BRONCO BILLY,** a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. But really, we can't wait to try their Margaritas. Pulchok, opposite Namaste Supermarket

**Dechenling,** the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, their pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel



**ORGANIC CAFÉ AND SALAD BAR,** hearty breakfasts and healthy salads while you catch up with your reading or emails in the heart of Thamel. Chakshibari Road, Thamel, 4215726

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



### बम्पर उपहार

एक जनालाई काठमाडौं नयाँ बानेश्वरनजिक वागमती अपार्टमेन्टमा २ बेडरुम अपार्टमेन्ट



### हरेक महिना

TATA Nano कार र Mahindra Rodeo 125 स्कूटर एक एक जनालाई



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### हरेक क्षण

हरेक ग्राहकले पाउनुहुनेछ हात खाली नजाने स्क्र्याच कूपन भित्र लाखौंका उपहार



हामी आउँदैछौं तपाईंको घरदैलोमा फेरि एक पटक

रजिष्टर गर्नका लागि CIR टाइप गरी ५२२५ मा एस.एम.एस. गर्नुहोला । यो सेवा नेपाल टेलिकममा मात्र उपलब्ध छ ।

नोट : वार्षिक ग्राहक यी सबै योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन् ।  
अर्धवार्षिक ग्राहक बम्परबाहेक अन्य योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन् ।  
त्रैमासिक ग्राहक भने हरेक दिन र हरेक क्षण योजनामा मात्र सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन् ।  
\*सर्तहरू लागू हुनेछ



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जे.डि.ए. कम्प्लेक्स, बागदरबार, काठमाडौं  
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**Cosmopolitan Café**, located in the heart of Basantapur, this cozy café offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. Frequenting by famed guitarist Hari Maharjan, spot him there and you might get an impromptu performance with your meal. *Basantapur (along Kathmandu Darbar Square), 4225246*

**Krishnarpan**, a specialty Nepali restaurant at The Dwarika's Hotel, 6 to 22 courses, an authentic Nepali meal. *The Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali, 4479488*



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

**Casa Toscana**, varieties of yummy pizzas to try and other Italian delights. *Casa Toscana, Pulchok*

**Cinnamon Grill Lounge**, offers delicious food and good music, added bonus- live performance by Ciney Gurung every Saturday. *Jhamsikhel*



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

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



**CHA CHA CAFÉ**, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. *Thamel*

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

GETAWAYS

**Lake View Resort**, with a cultural show every evening and hospitable staff, Lake View promises a pleasant stay. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

**Pokhara Grande**, a swimming pool to escape from the tropic heat, a massage parlour and spa to loosen up and a gymnasium to release stress- Pokhara Grande is a great option to unwind this summer. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



**TEMPLE TREE RESORT AND SPA**, a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna- it also hosts three different restaurants to cater to your needs. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, 977-61-465819*

"We also make casting jewellery"

SOMEPLACE ELSE

With restaurants growing like mushrooms (or actually faster than mushrooms) in the Jhamel lane, it is becoming harder to pick one for a dinner night. After much contemplation we stepped into one of the new establishments, GG Machan.

True to its name, the restaurant has been built on a tree house-like setting, designed to remind you of your safari vacations in Chitwan. There is also a separate bar area if you fancy the high-chairs. The warm lights and soft music that played while we were there created a calm ambience, good for a quiet evening with your family or friends. We were greeted by a smiling staff and complimentary bhatmas sadeko.

The biggest challenge at GG Machan is deciding your order. When you finally get through the 15-page long menu, you feel bombarded with choices of Nepali, Indian, Chinese, Italian and other delicacies.



For starters, the Twakka Makai (Rs 190), a signature creation of Chef Sandeep Khatri I had once tried at Bu Keba, caught my attention. The crunchy corn, sautéed with spices, is a fantastic adaptation of the roadside chatpate. Every spoon will make you want more. Trust me on this one.

The description of the Melting Pokoda (Rs 250) was too tempting to ignore. Mashed potato and mozzarella, seasoned in batter and then deep fried, looked like a treat when it arrived. But the pokoda was a little too big to finish in a single bite, and couldn't quite

achieve the "melt in your mouth" effect. Tip to the chef: decrease the size and increase the quantity. The potato could also use some spices.

Don't forget to meet Mr Wong at GG Machan. I don't know if it is inspired from the cartoon character Mr Wong or the Chinese restaurant by the same name, regardless of its source, Mr Wong's Pork Fillet (Rs 270) is worth a try. As you bite into the Cantonese style pork braised with spices, you can taste the tenderness of the meat and the richness of the sauce. Mr Wong's Pork Fillet is a must have.

While we were wonderfully surprised by Mr Wong, the GG Machan Fried Chicken (Rs 400) didn't quite live up to our expectations. Considering that it was a speciality of the restaurant, the beer battered chicken seemed a bit too bland for my taste, even with the tomato sauce that accompanied it. The Fettuccini Alfredo (390), pasta cooked in wine flambéed garlic with mushroom and chicken, gives you a mouthful of creamy and cheesy flavour and an aftertaste of jimbu, a herb usually used to flavour dal. For a cheese lover like me, the Alfredo was heavenly.

From the Indian kitchen, we picked the Mushroom Rogan Josh (Rs 320). The spiced fried mushrooms were delightfully juicy. The spicy gravy would have been a perfect match for naan or roti but it went well with the Chicken Fried Rice (Rs 200) we ordered.

We ended the evening with Chocolate Brownie (Rs 180) with ice cream (Rs 40). The brownie was a little too strong on cinnamon, but the duet of the brownie and the ice cream gave our evening a sweet ending.

I wouldn't recommend the non-alcoholic drinks at GG Machan, the choices are limited and not impressive. Stick with the regular coke or beer in their king-size beer glasses.

**PM**

Same lane as New Orleans, opposite Sigma Food Court





# The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel



It is a rare film that is made about people of retirement age. Cinema tends towards glamorising youth, and romance always seems to happen to the attractive and young. Well, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (for the Elderly and Beautiful)* is a film about seven English retirees who travel to India when they fortuitously find an advertisement online extolling the grace, beauty and exotic pleasures of the Marigold Hotel, a promising sounding hotel in Jaipur, the famed Pink City, with its palaces and romantic promises.



Each of the main characters has a tragic back story, some are unable to afford hip surgery in the UK and have been recommended to travel to India for a more budget surgery, others are retired civil servants barely able to afford a shabby apartment with a panic button in case they fall, one has lost a husband and her apartment in the course of paying off his debts, another is in search of a long lost Indian love. This is a film about the indignities of growing old and the injustice that comes with it. Most of our characters have worked hard in their youth and cannot afford the blissful retirement they deserve, some are struggling with a life trajectory that has led them to a situation they can neither accept nor significantly change. As the group arrives at the Marigold Hotel, still relative

strangers are dismayed to find that, though it has charm, and a madcap young manager, Sonny Kapoor (played by the gangly, adolescent looking Dev Patel from *Slumdog Millionaire*) – the hotel is run down, a bit dilapidated, with dodgy plumbing and phones that don't ring. Additionally, of course, they must deal with the beauties and indignities of a fascinating and sprawling Mother India – where the proverbial gap between the rich and the poor is more of a chasm. Though the social and cultural politics of the situation are not particularly well articulated, and the elderly team bumble through Jaipur trying to find themselves - the film does please and captivate. Mainly it is the consummate acting of stalwarts like Dame Judi Dench, who plays the gentle bereaved widow who learns how to blog in India, Tom Wilkinson, a retired High Court Judge who is also gay, and the marvelous, understated Bill Nighy as the defeated civil servant that allows the film to transcend its formula. These actors have played high drama to the hilt on stage. Dench in particular has acted as an unforgettable, searing Lady Macbeth opposite an equally unforgettable Ian McKellan (yes, he is Gandalf AND Magneto). It's their skill that allows them to tone down, and lift up a mildly didactic comedy and incidental romantic drama such as this one. Dev Patel, however, is disappointing as Sonny, and just as the usually great Irfan Khan was terribly miscast in the new *Spiderman* film, so too is Patel who strives to be the central character in the film, but fails. In fact, it is his love interest, Sunaina, played by an unknown Tena Desae who captivates. One can only hope she will surpass the slightly banal Frieda Pinto soon in the future. As one expects, there are happy endings all round and *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* is sure to bump up tourism in India. As for myself, I would re-watch the film just for the immense satisfaction derived from the final scene in which Bill Nighy and Judi Dench zoom around the crowded Jaipur streets on a motorbike. John Madden, the director, may have made the sublime *Shakespeare In Love* but it is a brave and sensitive director who can also take on a film with an ensemble cast with an average age of 70. Kudos to him for pointing out to the world does not just revolve around beautiful people in the prime of their lives. 🇳🇵

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

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
Watch trailer

# Irritable bowel



A twenty-eight year old man complains of daily bloating of his stomach with abdominal cramps for ten years. He often has multiple diarrhoea especially in the mornings, and his symptoms go away he visits the toilet. The patient never experiences these symptoms at night while asleep, and there is no weight loss. In fact he is slightly obese and otherwise feels completely fine. He says the symptoms get worse when he is under stress. He was planning to go to Dubai for work, but is nervous that his condition may cause problems. His physical examination and basic blood tests were all normal. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) which this patient has is one of the most common problem a doctor (specially a gastroenterologist, a bowel doctor) comes across in his clinic in Nepal. This is known as clinical diagnosis where the

doctor makes a prognosis after taking a careful history of the patient's problems and doing a simple physical exam. Special blood tests, scoping procedures of the bowel, or radiological tests are not required. Additional evaluation is not only unnecessary and expensive but also potentially harmful when invasive procedures are ordered. Of course if the patient is older, has fever, chills and weight loss, other more serious diagnosis may need to be considered.



The most important part of the treatment is to assure the patient that although this problem is annoying and inconvenient, it is not life-threatening. Sometimes patients with IBS have concomitant difficulties digesting milk and other dairy products, which is called lactase deficiency. Lactase is the enzyme in the small intestine necessary for digesting dairy products. Amazingly about 90 per cent of people in South Asia are lactase-deficient which leads to the classic gurgling noise ("paet gadyang gudung") from the belly followed by loose motion after drinking a glass or two of milk. Because this is such a common problem here, lactase deficiency may overlap with IBS. Patients with IBS should try staying away from milk and dairy products and see if that helps them. There is also evidence that IBS is linked to mental problems like depression and anxiety and seeking help in this regard may also be helpful in the treatment of IBS. This patient in question did see a competent Nepali gastroenterologist who made the correct diagnosis without resorting to unnecessary, expensive laboratory or radiological testing. He is now working in Dubai. 🇳🇵

## WEEKEND WEATHER

After a weak and fitful start, the southwest monsoon is (literally) gathering steam with a major pulse of warm moist air moving up from the Bay of Bengal. As this air rises along the Himalayan mountains it cools. Night-time drop in temperatures helps precipitate the rain which is the reason for nocturnal showers. Expect rain, sometimes heavy and relentless into the weekend.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27-19	28-18	29-20



**FREED HANDS:** A policeman registers the names of 150 children who were rescued from various embroidery factories in Bhaktapur on Wednesday. The factory owners have been detained for interrogation.



**HIGH STROKES:** Golfer Shiva Ram Shrestha receives Player of the Year (male) award at the Pulsar Sports Awards, organised in Kathmandu on Wednesday by Nepal Sports Journalists Forum.



**SEASON'S SOW:** A farmer in Pokhara holds rice samplings ready to be planted in her field as plantation season began on Friday.



**NAP TIME:** A rickshaw driver in Nepalganj takes a nap while waiting for customers on Sunday, as the temperature rose to above 40 degree Celcius.





BY THE WAY  
Anurag Acharya

We may soon have a new prime minister and a new cabinet, but the problems will be the same old ones that have haunted this nation for the last four years. Nepal's traditional politicians haven't learnt from history, and are therefore doomed to repeat it.

The megalomaniacs in the ruling circles are dragging this country back to the pre-27 May deadlock. Tuesday's all-party meeting made it clear that this bunch of men is impervious to reality and simply incapable of learning anything at all.

Baburam Bhattarai and his coalition partners in government may pat each other's backs but they don't seem to have anything new to offer either. They have been busy with populist agendas while under their watch, corruption and mismanagement in the government have broken all previous records. Inflation and shortage of essential goods has hit people hard.

Political bickering at the top has a chain reaction on the economy, development and people's livelihoods. The expansion of roads throughout the country, construction of hospitals, bridges and schools in remote areas should have brought relief to many. Instead, life has gone from bad to worse because our politics is such a mess. Public resentment against the parties is building, and it is going to manifest itself in elections which is why everyone is terrified of elections.

The opposition NC and



A new government made up of old leaders will mean the same old

NAVESH CHITRAKAR

# Monsoon of the megalomaniacs

UML share a part of this blame, but people will ultimately question the incumbent government for failing to get a grip on the situation. It is those in power that people expect action from.

To be sure, the government has found itself in an unprecedented void. The two main parties in the coalition have suffered serious splits. Its legitimacy is being questioned at every step. But by calling for the ouster of Bhattarai without presenting an alternative, the opposition is trying to drag the nation into another crisis. Both sides are gearing up for a showdown this monsoon.

The NC and UML are putting pressure on the president to act, while the Maoists have invited

Janajati leaders to form a new front and join their coalition. Both believe that somehow the other side will relent. Amid all the chaos, Gyanendra Shah's statement in Bhairawa was intended to remind the populace that however bad things were during the days of the monarchy, they weren't this bad.

Amidst all this, an important development is taking place within the Madhesi front. Last week, honorary Madhesi, Sarat Singh Bhandari broke away from the Bijay Gachhadar-led MJF-Loktantrik. Then, this week MJF-Republic withdrew its support from the government after ousting its sitting minister Rajkishor Yadav.

On the surface, this looks

like an intra-party squabbling, but one can discern a trend. The fact that Baburam Bhattarai chose not to replace an expelled member of the party in coalition from his cabinet has exposed the cracks in the Morcha, and if things don't change dramatically, the rifts will surface in the next two weeks.

Madhesi pundits reckon this may be the beginning of the end. "Legitimately the present government cannot be ousted until the next elections but it will be forced to resign if the coalition falls apart," a Madhesi intellectual told me this week.

Those observing these developments from the sidelines believe that although the Madhesi parties have been brought together by a common

agenda on federalism, they are not driven by a collective sense of purpose. There is increasing tussle within the Front to occupy the kingmaker role. The 'hidden hand' that was supposed to be the architect of this coalition must be getting restless.

Sooner or later, Bhattarai will have to step down. But that will leave us with CA elections, or CA revival which require unprecedented consensus, unlikely at present. Even if there is a roundtable conference as some have been suggesting, how will it resolve any of this?

This is paddy plantation season, so expect more mudslinging, and more sound and fury signifying nothing. 🇳🇵

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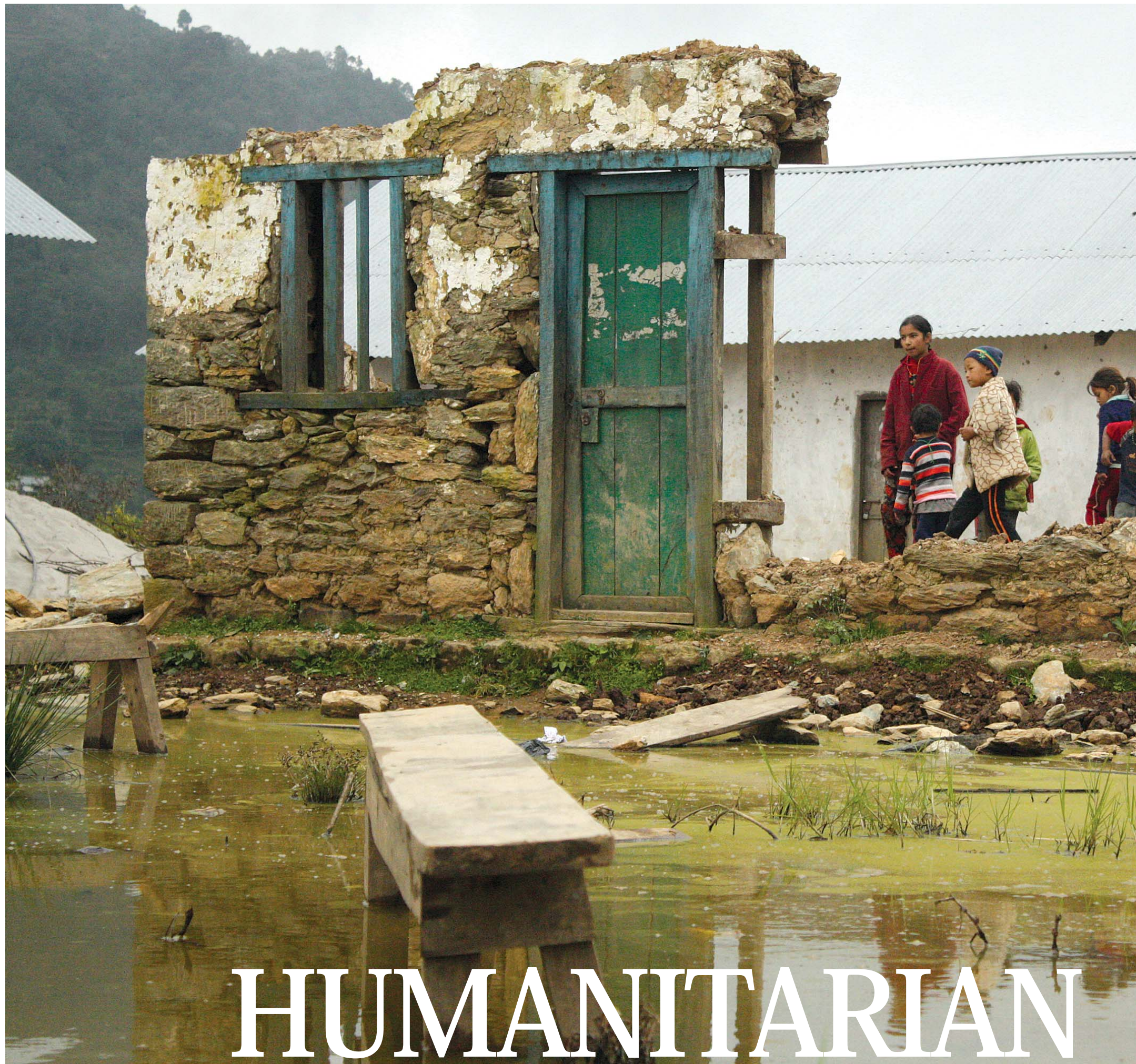
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# HUMANITARIAN FALLOUT

Nepal's constitutional deadlock has humanitarian consequences for its people

One of the main deal-breakers in the constitution on 27 May was a lack of agreement on how to constitute a future federal system. Various parties proposed states based on ethnicity, language or geography, but ultimately the politicians failed to agree on how to administer the country, or what to name the new states.

"An understanding of how to recognise identity, and how to balance diversity, is still unresolved. And what identity means, individual, group, or national?" asked Sapana Pradhan-Malla, a lawyer and recent member of the CA.

The mid-July deadline for approving a national budget will soon be reached, dozens of bills are yet to be ratified, including

ones to end caste discrimination and determine reparations for people who disappeared during the war, while 3,100 former rebels in cantonments await word on their reintegration into the national army.

A key demand of the November 2011 peace deal was to integrate former rebels into the national army. Most of the 17,000 Maoist fighters eligible for government-funded 'retirement' packages of up to Rs 800,000 each took the money, while some 3,100 decided to try and join the national army.

Control of the rebel camps, where the fighters have lived since the 2006 peace deal, switched from Maoist to state control in mid-April, but integration into the national army cannot proceed without

government approval, said Bala Nanda Sharma, a retired army general and coordinator of the multi-party Army Integration Special Committee.

On 10 May, the committee sent the prime minister a request via the Defense Ministry to clarify how to determine a fighter's age and level of formal education, two deciding factors for joining the army. Should the results of the UN verification process in 2008 be used, or the current levels? Sharma said the committee has so far not received a reply, delaying progress.

"We have been discussing the ways with security agencies to integrate the combatants who have opted for integration," Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai's political adviser,

Devendra Poudel, said. "The issue is also being discussed in the [ruling] party meeting, but we have not yet decided how we should go about it."

Robert Piper, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal, told IRIN that integrating the fighters, a key step in honouring the November peace deal, was a "big concern" because having the fighters in cantonments is not "tenable".

**There were 38 bills the legislative committee was reviewing before it disbanded, including three considered critical:**

- The Bill on Disappearances (Crime and Punishment) Act (2008), which seeks

to criminalise the enforced disappearances that occurred during the insurgency period between 1996 and 2006, claiming almost 18,000 lives according to government estimates, set up a commission to investigate past cases, prosecute perpetrators, and provide reparation to the victims.

- The Bill on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2007), which proposes establishing a commission to investigate 'gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity' committed during the conflict.

- The National Dalit Commission Act 2011, which prohibits caste-based discrimination and





PICS:ANURAG ACHARYA



KRISHNA SINJALI

STRUGGLING TO MOVE ON

1 A school building in Jorphokari, Panchthar lies in ruins months after the 25 September earthquake

2 A boy inspects the burnt out skeleton of a bike during the three-day banda in May called by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities

3 Former Maoist combatants line up for the regrouping process in Chula Chuli, Ilam in November

‘untouchability’ practices against Dalits.

“The new government or the parliament can scrap, amend or endorse the bills,” said Ek Raj Bhandari, a former parliamentarian and coordinator of the legislative committee that finalises bills before parliamentary endorsement. “Until then the bills will be there in the legislative committee.”

Sapana Pradhan-Malla said the impasse heightens political impunity and delays justice to the victims of conflict.

The Disaster Management Act, five years in the making, was scheduled to be introduced shortly in parliament. Andrew Martin, head of the humanitarian support unit at the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the capital, said those plans are now on hold.

“If a large earthquake happens in Kathmandu,

government structures are insufficient. There is not enough capacity on disaster preparedness. Changing ministers and political insecurity leave people with a shallow knowledge of preparedness,” Martin said.

While 69 of Nepal’s 75 districts have local emergency response plans, there is still no plan detailing how international aid workers would quickly get staff and equipment into the country, who would set up emergency hospitals and channel electricity to camps for displaced persons, or how to track families - all points under negotiation.

Three weeks from the deadline for approving the 2013 budget, the NC’s Ram Sharan Mahat, warned that political instability will make it difficult to get approval for increased spending without “full political consensus”. Mahat, who has been finance minister five times, could only present one-third of the total budget one year due to

political stalemate.

“In these cases, we can only pass a partial budget to ensure ongoing activities are not hampered. There cannot be a policy shift or new budgetary programs due to political turmoil, which creates economic uncertainty,” he explained.

The 2008-09 budget was delayed by two months, in 2010-11 it was four months late, as was the 2011-12 budget.

Late budgets choke off needed funds for development, said Chandan Sapkota, an economist at the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment office in Kathmandu. “A delayed budget means a halt in work due to shortage of funds to pay for workers and materials. This usually leads to liquidity problem and halt in rural development work for several months,” Sapkota said.

The UK Department for International Development

(DfID) one of the country’s largest bilateral donors, has expressed concern about the loss of the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee. “We can’t take unnecessary risks with our money,” said Dominic O’Neill, DfID’s director in Nepal, local media reported. The donor has pledged \$516 million from 2011 to 2015.

Delivery backlogs caused by strikes in May, coupled with rising fuel costs linked to an ongoing energy crisis and late payments by the state-owned oil company to its supplier in India, increased the World Food Program’s transport costs to get emergency food supplies to the mountains in the mid-west and far-west regions by up to 70 per cent in June, said the agency’s deputy director in Nepal, Nicolas Oberlin.

A 2009 regional breakdown of the Global Hunger Index, said Nepal’s mid-western mountain region had among the highest levels of hunger worldwide, just

above the Democratic Republic of Congo in Central Africa.

At present Nepal is divided into five regions from east to west – Far West, Mid-West, West, Central and East - with control held by the central government in Kathmandu.

UN Resident Piper said the rise of aggressive identity-based politics and a recent increase in street violence have been troubling. “Federalism will not go away. This discussion will be revisited and needs to be managed differently,” he added.

A community of farmers in Banibhar village, 20 kilometres outside of Nepalganj in western Nepal were asked recently what they understood by the federalist issue holding up the constitution. Kul Bahadur Shahi, 53, asked: “What is a constitution?”

His main concern is how bandas affect his ability to transport produce. 🇳🇵



# Bringing budget

Annapurna Post, 4 July

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai sought advise of legal experts regarding the budget and the November elections. Legal and constitutional experts including Attorney General Mukti Pradhan and his predecessors Raghav Lal Baidya and Yubaraj Sangraula were summoned by the prime minister on Tuesday.

“Article 88 and 93 allows the government to announce the budget through an ordinance after consulting with the president. But due to its limited mandate, presenting a full budget is not advisable,” explained Baidya. Regarding voter’s registration, Baidya said the government can introduce an ordinance to amend the Election Act as per Article 63 (7) of the interim constitution. President of Bar Association, Prem Bahadur Khadka, also maintained that the government cannot present more than one third of the budget as per the Supreme Court’s verdict.

However, vice- president Surendra Mahato

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट



differed in his views and said there is no legal obstacle to prevent the formulation of a full budget as per article 88. Advocate Ram Narayan Bidari too said the precedence cited in the Supreme Court’s verdict is only valid if there is a House of Representatives which cannot be misinterpreted in the present context.

The Supreme Court, on Sunday had turned down the writ petition filed by advocates seeking interim order against the government’s plan to produce the budget through an ordinance.

# Consensus time



Editorial, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 4 July

The Constituent Assembly was dissolved more than a month ago, but weeks of political deadlock have halted all progress. Although Prime Minister Bhattarai declared fresh elections before dissolving the CA, neither elections nor a future

roadmap for the country is possible without consensus among the parties. The parties have no option than to work together to prevent the country from sliding down a slippery slope.

The parties have realised that terminating the CA due to differences on state restructuring without thinking of alternatives has been a big mistake. They are now

bickering over it and blaming one another. But it is high time they stopped the blame game and mended ways to end the political vacuum. Going to the polls to elect yet another jumbo CA for the completion of the remaining five per cent of the constitution writing won’t be accepted by the people. Therefore the best way forward is to reinstate the CA for a certain time. However, the parties must guarantee that they will complete the writing within that timeframe.

The country wouldn’t have been stuck in such a stalemate if the parties had shown foresight by discussing possible alternatives before ending the CA. If they fail to reach a consensus and resolve the crisis immediately, other elements may come into play and the parties will have nothing left to do except regret their indecisiveness.

# The other side of trade

Upendra Pokharel, *Nepal*, 8 July

नेपाल

Thriving illegal trade along Nepal’s borders is worsening the country’s trade deficit with its neighbours. While official statistics are not available, a study by the Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industries states that illicit trade along the Indo-Nepal border alone amounts to 38.9 per cent of Nepal’s foreign trade. Every year Nepal loses close to Rs 3 billion in royalty because of the black market.

Nepal used to be a hub for Indian businessmen who imported Chinese goods illegally. But this trend decreased significantly after the Indian government opened its market to China. But a large amount of contraband timber still continues to enter



the Nepali market through the porous Indian border. Nepal is also a transit point for illicit trade of red sandalwood from India to Tibet. Last month, a gang smuggling sea horses on this route were caught in Kathmandu.

Similarly, precious timber, herbs and wildlife from Nepal’s hilly districts are exported to India and China. Illegally traded yarsagumba alone is worth millions. Even children are involved in this business (*pic, left*).

Economists admit that such black market trade is a sizable chunk of the GDP.

They also blame the fall in exports on growing illicit trade. According to the study, Birganj experiences the highest amount of unauthorised trade each year followed by Biratnagar and Bhairahawa.

# “Please spare us the trouble”

Interview with NC leader Gagan Thapa, *BBC Nepali Service*, 26 June

बिबिसि नेपाली

**BBC: How do you assess the present political situation?**  
**Gagan Thapa:** The constitution was not drafted because of the rigid positions taken by a few men at the top. Now we are trying to get the same people to agree on the same issues, but none of them are willing to negotiate. I am not sure how this is going to work.



**What do you propose then?**

People who are not willing to negotiate with open minds must give way to those who are capable. I am not blaming the leaders entirely, because as a member of the CA, all of us are collectively responsible. But they were unable to forge consensus for the last four years, so I think it’s time they passed on the responsibility to those who are more competent.

**But is it practical to expect the top brass to hand over the baton to others within the party?**

People might think I am being impractical but refusing to look for alternatives because it’s not something we are used to won’t help either. Besides, how sensible is it to expect the same stubborn leaders to find consensus without relenting their positions?

**Are you saying the older generation should give way to young leaders?**

My views might not be representative of all youngsters, but I will tell you with great certainty that if our old leaders decide to retire tomorrow, even their children won’t lament their departure from Nepali politics.

**Your recommendation seems highly unlikely. What are your other suggestions?**

There is no historical precedence here, we are on our own. The parties have put forward three options: first, reinstating the CA through consensus, second, re-electing the CA and, third, electing the parliament which will then endorse the new constitution. But none of these alternatives can make the leaders change their inflexible attitudes. So how is that going to produce any result?

**But have you and others tried to talk to the decision-makers in your party?**

Yes we have. I am speaking in the media in order to reach out to the leaders. I urge the top brass of my party, Sushil Koirala and Ram Chandra Paudel, along with other leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Baburam Bhattarai, Jhala Nath Khanal, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Bijay Gachhadar and Mahanta Thakur to spare this nation further trouble. Since they have been unable to pull this country out of stalemate, they need to trust other capable members in their parties.



There will be a national crisis, I won’t resign.

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 1 July

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ I am a King not a politician. If I return to power it will be as a King. ”

Gyanendra Shah quoted in *Rajdhani*, 4 July



# The healing touch

A doctor's selfless professional and personal effort has helped maintain the conscience of a humanitarian profession

SUBHAS DEVKOTA

A small frame, a familiar smiling face as he walks around the corridors of the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) is a source of inspiration to doctors as well as patients in a country where medical care is either too commercialised or too apathetic.

At 55, Govinda KC has not only become the country's leading orthopaedic surgeon but also a conscience keeper of the profession not just in Nepal, but in other parts of the world that are struck by natural disasters. The amazing thing is that KC doesn't depend on donor funding, but pays his own way when he hears of earthquakes, floods or epidemics in Nepal, Pakistan, India, or even Haiti.



KC is now determined to treat not just the patients but also the sick management of TUTH, Nepal's largest medical training institute. A frugal and humble man, KC is not married and lives in the modest staff quarters of the hospital.

While most celebrity doctors in Nepal devote their attention to expensive private clinics and have done well for themselves, KC is true to his doctor's oath and has dedicated his life to care and treatment of the needy.

"It's actually a selfish decision," KC says light-heartedly, "giving the profession all you have is the most fulfilling thing in life. Money can't buy that level of personal satisfaction."

Twice a year he travels to

remote parts of Nepal, spending weeks conducting field clinics where he performs operations for those who can't get to hospitals because they have sustained serious injuries during falls from trees and cliffs. KC has travelled to all 75 districts and run medical camps in 60 of them, all of them from his own personal expense.

Mani Dhakal works in the Khotang District Hospital in Diktel, and was impressed with KC's commitment to his profession. "Last year he travelled on foot from Okhaldhunga to Diktel, trained doctors in our hospital and proceeded to walk on to Bhojpur."

Besides Nepal, KC packs his bags and is on the next plane whenever he hears of disasters in other parts of the world. In 2001, when a devastating earthquake hit India's western state of Gujarat, KC spent three weeks in Bhuj treating the injured. He has also treated survivors of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, where he returned last year to help flood victims. In 2008, he went to Burma to help survivors of Hurricane Nargis and in 2010 he was in Haiti after the earthquake where he performed 232 operations in three weeks.

KC says he saves enough to do these trips on his own, and sometimes accepts help from relief organisations. "Where there is a will there is a way," he says, "all you need is the determination to help."

While it is common for people to look for excuses to justify self-indulgence and ambitions, KC relishes the deep sense of satisfaction he derives from the care he can give. He says he considers it a privilege that he is in a position to be of help to others in distress.

In a country where cynicism, selfishness and corruption are widespread, Govinda KC should be an inspiration not just for other doctors, but also for Nepal's educated and privileged class.

For a longer version of this story, see: Himal Khabarpatrika.



PICS: DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

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# Country going to the dogs

As an Ass, it pains me to say this, but the country is going to the dogs. I have come to this conclusion based on the news report this week that street dogs have invaded and taken over the terminal building of Nepal's only international airport. While the human citizens of this country have to go through elaborate security to enter what is euphemistically called an "airport", canines can saunter in and out without showing any IDs. What if they are terrorists posing as dogs? And when police sniffer dogs are led into the baggage carousels to smell out explosives and drugs, the mongrels bark their heads off and try to chase them away. We must give it to the management for making KTM a unique tourist attraction by:

- 1. Allowing all kinds of fauna and flora to enrich the airport's biodiversity, rhesus monkeys have a free run of the departure concourse, rodents find their way into planes, and the runway was once invaded by a wild boar.
- 2. Having the most aromatic toilets this side of Suez, with odours that pervade the arrival area to acclimatise arriving tourists to the sights, sounds



- and smells of Nepal that awaits them outside.
- 3. Introducing the shortest bus ride between the plane and terminal building of any airport in the world (7.1 seconds) which definitely deserves to be in the Guinness Book.
  - 4. There are other countries in Asia that have worse roads than Kathmandu, but we have the only airport in the region where the runways have potholes.
  - 5. The Department of Irritation takes great pains to ensure that the immigration lines for tourists are as long as possible

- so as to give the impression that Nepal is a very popular destination and tourists are dying to get in.
- 6. This is the friskiest airport in Asia, with at least four pat downs between the time you enter the terminal and the time you enter the plane. New slogan: "Visit Nepal and Get Four Free Massages On Departure Performed by Experienced Masseuses"
- The latest in the intra-Maobaddie feud is that PKD and BRB are barely on speaking terms. Things got worse after the PM got back from Rio with

renewed confidence and swagger, and got his prabuckta to essentially say that he (BRB) would henceforth be speaking on behalf of the party and not the Chairman. This really ticked Awesome off, but the problem now is that he has burnt his bridges with his hard-on pals and is pretty isolated now that Rain Man and Com Dina have also defected to BRB's side. And Chitwan has become the new frontline in the territorial struggle between the RBT and PKD with comrades now shooting each other with UNMIN registered guns.

But what PKD has in his favour is that he has all the moolah, and can buy any support he wants. Which is why it was important for Rain Man to remain as Finance Minister so he can treat the national treasury as a party war chest. Being the cunning Bahun that he is, one can't count Awesome out yet. His strategy has always been to present himself as the main obstacle to any agreement so that he is therefore also key to any solution. Works brilliantly

every time: by being a part of the problem the others have to include you as a part of the solution.

Looks like our comrades got an earful from visiting Comrade Ai Ping of the international dept of the Chinese Commie Party who took a dim view, especially of PKD's penchant for ethnic politics. Ping told Dahal "not to make the mistakes Mao made by dividing China up into autonomous ethnic regions". Chairman Maximus seems to have got the message, especially after he heard that Ping's tete-e-tete with Kiran Kaka lasted 1 hour while his meeting was only 45 minutes.

It's not just Com Fearsome who is being snubbed by the Chinese, Ping didn't bother to call on BRB either. And the PM got the cold shoulder from Wen Jiabao who refused even a photo op with him at Rio Minus 20. This is even more glaring because Premier Wen had all the time in the world to meet other world leaders, including Comrade Thinley of Bhutan who is lobbying for membership of the Security Council later this year.





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