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Shifting the goalposts

It has become accepted practice in Nepal's politics to sign an agreement at the eleventh hour after marathon negotiations, and then just go on to do your own thing. The Big Four had agreed on a five-point deal that after Baburam Bhattarai, it would be the NC's 'turn' to be prime minister. Now, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal says under no circumstances would

the NC be allowed to head the next government. The prime minister told his supporters on Wednesday, it was bad enough having a Congress president, "imagine if there was also a Congress prime minister".

The NC itself is in such disarray that it can't even agree on its candidate for prime ministership. Besides, it hasn't come up with any new attractive ideas on why it should have

prime ministership other than to imply that it wants to head an election government for the incumbent advantage.

With only a month to go for the extended holiday period, the NC, UML, the Baidya Maoists, and other smaller parties are set to take to the streets to pile up pressure on Prime Minister Bhattarai to step down and make way for an all-party government.

The ruling Maoist-Madheshi alliance also plans nationwide mass meetings to explain why it won't let go. To complicate things, Dahal is waiting for Bhattarai to make a serious misstep so he himself can be prime minister.

Forecast: expect some street fireworks before the country goes into a month-long holiday coma and reawakens in mid-November. 🇳🇵



Preserving the social fabric

Artist weaves designer carpets in Nepal and sells them in Australia to create jobs and fund education projects

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The art of diplomacy

Brazil ambassador Marcos Duprat feels Nepal is an ideal posting for an artist

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NO HYDRO, NO POWER

Many outsiders are surprised that this country survives even though there is electricity for only six to ten hours a day, and marvel at how Nepalis muddle along uncomplainingly. But what is even more shocking is that Kathmandu's three million people survive with no water supply system. Most neighbourhoods have no mains, those that have pipes have no water. The lucky ones get water for only one hour every three days.

The only reason this city is not completely uninhabitable is that traditional waterspouts built by the Malla kings 400 years ago to bring water through underground channels from the Valley rim are still functioning. The few water mains that exist were laid down during the Rana period nearly 100 years ago to pipe water from Sundarjal and Pharping.

Yet, new 17-storey apartment blocks are going up, housing colonies are spreading across the suburbs, highrise office blocks are sprouting everywhere. Kathmandu's urban water demand has exceeded 200 million litres a day, when supply is only 45 million litres a day in the dry season. More than half of that supply is lost due to leaky pipes.

For many, the only recourse is to buy water from private tankers, or drilling deep into the aquifer. A recent survey estimated that private tankers supply up to 40 million litres of water to customers daily, and more than 60 million litres of ground water a day is pumped up from wells. With extraction far outpacing recharge, the water table has fallen alarmingly, and many traditional wells have gone dry.

Subsidence is already becoming a problem, with the Nepal Telecom building in Jawalakhel dipping into the ground. If the current rate of water extraction continues,



BIKRAM RAI

Engineers can't solve problems created by politicians messing things up so badly

experts warn, Kathmandu's ground water crisis will reach a tipping-point and sinkholes could devour neighbourhoods.

Political meddling, corruption, and gross incompetence have left the capital powerless and waterless. Instead of investing in increasing mains capacity, reducing leakage, constructing monsoon storage reservoirs on the Valley rim, the state decided 25 years ago to lavish half the country's entire annual budget on a grandiose project to bring snowmelt from

the Melamchi River water to Kathmandu through a 27km tunnel. And even that project is stuck. Melamchi has been mired in controversy, allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and lack of coordination among donors. After the Norwegians, Swedes, and the World Bank pulled out of the project in the past decade, the \$600 million project finally went ahead with a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The latest in the long Melamchi saga is that the government this week terminated the contract of the two Chinese companies working on the tunnel, citing non-performance. This means the project could be delayed by a further five years, provided the re-bidding goes smoothly. Melamchi could have been made more feasible, and egalitarian, if it had been a multipurpose project to generate electricity and irrigate the Bagmati valley downstream. (See: 'Revisiting a multi-purpose Melamchi', #379). But, of course, decisions here are not made on the basis of logic, rationality, and economic viability. Cheaper alternatives are ignored because larger projects have larger kickbacks.

In a way, justice is being served on Nepal's pampered capital. Kathmandu may deserve to suffer from an acute water shortage just so its denizens are reminded what the rest of the country has to endure. Melamchi is a political disaster, and engineers can't solve problems created by politicians messing things up so badly.

For now, we may have to look up to the heavens for an answer. Just as many have turned to solar power to cope with the electricity crisis, the only short-term solution to the water shortage maybe to invest in household rainwater harvesting.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com



BIKRAM RAI

CHOOSING ELECTION

How can Kunda Dixit claim there is a risk of an 'ethnic election' ('Choosing election', #623)? Just take a look at the photo (pic, above). All the 'biggies' are the same Brahmin men, six per cent of Nepali society, who have ruled the nation primarily for their own benefit for decades. *Nepali Times* might choose to label the polls an 'ethnic election', but it is actually an opportunity to ensure greater inclusion and diversity in Nepali politics for the benefit of those communities that have rarely been given a chance to guide the country by these less than 'democratic' parties.

Naryan Stan

- Howling or braying for elections is all well. But what happens after polls? Which party or coalition of parties is likely to emerge with a plurality of votes? If the Maoist/Madhes alliance is to win, then there is no point in having elections because it will only legitimise the present corrupt government. Also, is the election likely to bring new capable leaders, or will the same old incompetent faces remerge to get electoral legitimacy? These are questions we should be asking ourselves.

KK Sharma

- Election is unlikely to change the opinion of a large majority of Nepalis who are tired of the never ending political charade. There is also no guarantee that election will bring about positive change or solve the current impasse. However, for the sake of democracy the electorate, which till date has been treated as a mere spectator, needs to see all competing parties. Regardless of whether it is the RPP with its slogan of 'bring back the monarchy', the Maoists with their armed-revolution, the Madhesi parties with separate one-Madhes-one-pradesh demand, the ethnic entities with their demand for federal states based on ethnicity, or the NC and UML advocating for parliamentary democracy with the same top guns who control their party apparatus, Nepalis need to know what the parties and their candidates stand for.

Nirmal

INTOLERANCE OF TOLERANCE

A very sharp, well-argued editorial which takes a refreshingly straightforward stance on the absolute nature of press freedom ('Intolerance of tolerance', Editorial, #623). However, with the speed and reach of the Internet and its anonymity there may be an argument to be made in

favour of protecting social harmony by instituting some form of control. I don't know how these controls can be implemented without a repressive state using it for a blanket URL ban, but there must be a middle way. Otherwise, I'm afraid there will be more of the outrage that followed the Youtube video about the Prophet.

Bob

- Arguing that one cannot be half-free is good rhetoric, but the reality is that the average Nepali is not even secure about her life and property. In a country where the government cannot guarantee its citizen the right to life and property, where murders are committed in broad daylight (for example the recent shooting of a Supreme Court justice) and where culprits not only walk free but are rewarded, how realistic is it to expect that stoking people's deep-held religious (or communal) beliefs may not eventually lead to uncontrollable violence like in the Middle-East?

Dev Batsya

- Powerfully said. Freedom of Artistic Expression is generally considered more liberal in reasonable restrictions partly because art does not reach the mass public and artists have lead philosophical revolutions by their eccentric ideas. If we can't agree with something, we should ignore it, or protest it, or challenge it lawfully.

Ujjwal Acharya

- Great editorial. Here in the US there is constant pressure from the religious right to censor artistic expression. This has resulted in less Federal funding for the arts in general and the

disappearance the teaching of music and visual arts in public schools. Public funding for Public Radio and TV has all but disappeared, while the most-watched TV station in the US is owned by Rupert Murdoch, a British citizen. We do live in strange times.

Hilary

- Although countries in the West like to portray themselves as the bastions of freedom, democracy, and human rights, they are actually big hypocrites. China, Russia, India, and North Korea put restrictions on freedom of speech to protect the rulers, but the West prevents people from speaking freely to protect some unknown individuals and interest groups. The US cracked down on wikileaks citing security, but it did not block the anti-Islam video which led to so much violence.

Who cares

VANISHING PUBLIC SERVICES

I recently read a speech by the mayor of Bogota who said, "A developed country is not where poor people own cars, but where rich people use public transport" ('Vanishing public services', Dambar Krishna Shrestha, #623). The quality of public services is definitely the best indicator of development in any country.

As a child growing up in Kathmandu, I have fond memories of simple joys like riding the trolley bus and marvelling at its automated doors, dropping an aerogram at a bright red post box with yellow roof, and watching in awe the jet of water streaming off a fire hydrant. Unfortunately, instead of improving upon the foundations, politicians in

Nepal have leeched public institutions including the trolley bus into fragility and oblivion.

Dhedubadar

- Stupid politicians who worry about supposedly big ideological and national issues will never care about public services such as effective and efficient transportation. Kathmandu needs local elections immediately because unless we have accountable local leadership to manage our public services, the capital will become uninhabitable day by day.

Raj

TAKING NATURE BACK TO PEOPLE

Well done, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands, for keeping the legacy of Nepal's pioneer conservationists alive ('Taking nature back to people', Bhrikuti Rai, #623). Although it will be hard to fill their big shoes, we can carry on their good work by enhancing and preserving the natural beauty of Nepal.

Yam Gurung

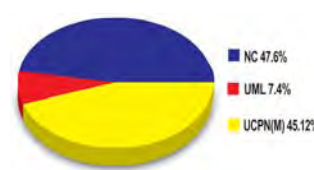
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nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #624

Q. Who should lead the electoral government?

Total votes: 2,307



Weekly Internet Poll # 625. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What do you think of the opposition's decision to unseat the Bhattarai-led government through street protests?

Getting rid of the brokers

What Jumla apples and Kathmandu politics should have in common



GUEST COLUMN
Anil Keshary Shah

An apple farmer in Jumla has to protect his saplings through three harsh winters before they start bearing fruit. When mature, one tree can yield as much as 100kg of apples, and they sell for Rs 15 per kg in the Khalanga Bazar. These are packed into boxes and transported to Kathmandu where the apples sell for Rs 250 per kg.

The solution is not to tell Jumla farmers not to grow apples, but to put into place a price mechanism so that the producer is not cheated, and the consumer gets more apples for the same price. This means finding ways to connect farmers more effectively to market, cutting out or minimising the impact of middlemen, so that the farmers in Jumla get a fair share of the margin.

Similarly, in politics too, 28 million Nepalis who put their faith and aspirations in the hands of our political middlemen have been let down. Thousands of young Nepalis even sacrificed their lives to be part of a revolution and a people's movement to start afresh with a new constitution. Having done so, they went back to their hard lives eking out a living from the harsh land, putting their fate in the hands of those they elected. Four years and billions of rupees later, they are still waiting.

The question here is no longer why did a new constitution not get passed and who is to blame, but are we okay with exercising our valuable democratic right of casting our vote for the same people, parties, and ideologies all over again?



Just because elected leaders were not able to deliver on a new constitution, it doesn't mean that we should start doubting or looking for alternatives to our democratic system of governance. And the solution will also not come from merely finding fault and criticising our political leadership and parties.

Maybe the time has come to decide whether the political brokers on whom we had faith to deliver a better nation have been leading us astray. Like the apple middlemen, politicians have been taking advantage of the Nepali people's trust in them.

But change is happening in Jumla. A group of pioneering entrepreneurs with capital and market linkages in Kathmandu have got together with young farmers in Jumla, bought a large plot of land and started planting apple saplings. By taking the resources and value

additions of urban Kathmandu and combining them with local skills and knowledge, the profit-sharing will be fairer. Who knows, maybe apples will also be cheaper in Kathmandu.

If only we could find such a bridge to bring together Nepal's political brokers with the people. But for that to happen, one of two things needs to be in place.

Option One is a realisation among the political forces that they have wronged the people whom they represent. It hasn't sunk into the current leadership that Nepalis are no longer interested in who is going to be the next prime minister, who are going to be ministers, or which parties are going to be in government. Those things make no difference on whether there is food on the plate.

A good starting point is for the leaders individually and collectively apologise to

the Nepali people for letting them down. There needs to be an attitudinal change so leaders don't see themselves as "rulers" anymore, but as "servants" of the people. That is the only way they will win back the people's confidence, a prerequisite to facing the electorate in the next polls.

Many of you may be shaking your heads, thinking this will never happen in your lifetime. If so, you have to think of Option Two: the formation of a completely new political force made up of individuals who have excelled in their respective fields, Nepalis who have proven themselves and through their work, earned the trust of the people.

Individuals like you and me who have successful, comfortable lives will need to step out of our cosy cocoons to take on not only the challenges facing our nation, but also

the political forces that are wasting time and squandering their mandates. No matter how fragmented they may seem now, when it comes to choosing the next prime minister, you can be sure the politicians will circle the wagons when their power is challenged.

Or there could be a combination of Options One and Two so young forward-looking individuals currently in the political parties, and individuals not currently in mainstream politics come together to forge an alliance.

Just like the apple farmers in Jumla forged a partnership with entrepreneurs from Kathmandu, the time has come to bypass the political middlemen.

Anil Keshary Shah is a banker and a concerned Nepali citizen.

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See also: Roads to riches, #468

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ALL PICS: BIKRAM RAI

Preserving the social fabric

Artist weaves designer carpets in Nepal and sells them in Australia to create jobs and fund education in Nepal

JUANITA MALAGON

When Australian artist Isabella Holding, 27, visited a carpet factory while on holiday in Kathmandu three years ago, she got a brain wave.

Back in Australia, she contacted some well-known Australian artists like Heather Shimmen, Euan Heng, Graham Fransella, Judy Holding, Rae Ganim, Wendy Teakel, Angela Cavaleri, and Kate Durham and got them to agree to incorporate their art into carpets that would be woven in Nepal.

Then she came back to Kathmandu and talked to Kiran B Khadgi at the Kumbeshwar Technical School (KTS) in Lalitpur, who admits he found the idea of turning art into carpets a bit weird at first.

"How can you copy paintings into our carpets?" Khadgi recalls telling Holding, "but we said ok, we'll give it a try."

Holding was impressed with the result, and she organised an exhibition, 'Weaving Art and Change', in Melbourne last year with eight handwoven carpets from Nepal in limited editions of five. Each carpet sold for US\$2,900.

"A lot of people like the idea that it was a collaboration with weavers in Nepal, and we could make a substantial donation to the Khumbeswor Technical School," Holding says.

At the KTS, 30-year-old Sumitra was quietly weaving a carpet on Monday, careful not to wake up her baby whom she brought to work because he had fever. Normally, he would be at the KTS day-care centre. Sumitra is on a six month apprenticeship to learn weaving. There are 17 other women weavers here between the ages of 17 and 55, seven wool spinners, two dyers, and a trimmer. Employees get free education for their children, medical insurance, and a savings scheme.

KTS is a founder member of Fair Trade Group Nepal, and this is what convinced Holding to work with the company. "When I visited KST for the first time, I was amazed by the work being done both creatively and socially in Nepal and wanted to help," she explains.

KTS also makes and sells furniture and knitwear, but 40 per cent of sales is from carpets. For Khadgi, the Australian collaboration is a win-win formula for his organisation, which benefits from employment creation and funding for its school and other facilities for employees.

"Best of all," Khadgi adds, "Isabella has made our carpets well-known internationally."

Weaving Art and Change in Nepal
23 September to 7 October
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4218048, 4438979
www.weaveartchange.com.au
www.kumbeshwar.com

SHOWING OFF: Australian artist Isabella Holding (*top, right*) talks about the original artwork, 'Jezebel', which was turned into a carpet that Kiran B Khadgi (*above*) of the Kumbeshwar Technical School in Lalitpur shows to a customer. A weaver's deft fingerwork makes these woollen works of art possible (*below*).



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Banking on financial inclusion

DANIEL SCHYDLOWSKY

The 2008 financial crisis highlighted the profound importance of finance for the globalised economy. But 2.5 billion people worldwide still lack access to formal banking services, credit facilities, or savings instruments. Bringing this largely ignored 'missing market' into the formal financial system would enrich and strengthen the global economy.

The unbanked, who live primarily in developing countries, comprise nearly half of the world's working-age population. In some countries, as much as 90 per cent of the population lacks access to the formal financial system. This impedes their participation in the global economy by restricting their

services. Harnessing this technology to expand financial inclusion would be economically empowering, particularly for smallholder farmers and merchants in rural communities, who could use their mobile phones to access market-price data, transfer cash, make retail purchases, deposit income, and pay bills – all while tending their fields or shops.

This would encourage saving, which is crucial to building a business and providing investment capital to others. And legal, regulated options for safeguarding savings and accessing credit would reduce reliance on the black market or the informal economy, where financial exploitation flourishes.

In Kenya, regulators have created the conditions needed for an innovative mobile-phone financial-services system,

Similarly, a state-owned Indonesian bank, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, is providing micro-financing services to 30 million people, while in India, new 'no-frills' savings accounts have attracted 12.5 million customers. Other homegrown regulatory success stories come from Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Uganda, South Africa, the Philippines, Thailand, and Mongolia.

Expanding and supporting financial inclusion is a win-win for both the global south and north. Developing countries can benefit from the opening of markets to new trade and investment, while the developed world can benefit from the infusion of new customers, suppliers, and capital (possibly in the trillions of dollars). If the world's 2.5 billion unbanked join the global economy, every industry will experience innovation and growth.

Rather than waiting for solutions from American, European, or other advanced country bankers, developing countries are leading the way toward financial inclusion, dramatically reshaping the global economy in the process. Opening the financial system to the world's poorest people will unlock their economic and social potential to the benefit of all.

Daniel Schydlofsky is the head of the Superintendencia de Banca, Seguros y Administradoras Privadas de Pensiones, which oversees Peru's financial sector.
www.project-syndicate.org

nepalitimes.com

Banking on cell phones, #611
Banking on technology, # 561
Leapfrogging with phone cash, #516

Opening the financial system to the world's poorest will unlock their economic and social potential to the benefit of all

ability to buy goods and services, to borrow and save, or to invest in their future and that of their community and country.

Most global poverty-reduction efforts rely on 'top-down' solutions –development aid flows from rich to poor countries– that largely focus on education, food security, and disease management and prevention.

In general, homegrown solutions have proven to be more effective than externally imposed policies. While a single, universal solution will not work, understanding factors that are common across countries provides a useful way forward. In developing countries, an estimated 1.7 billion people own mobile phones, but have no access to banking

M-PESA, to flourish. Since its 2008 launch, M-PESA has attracted nearly 14 million Kenyans – almost one-third of the country's total population – who use it for money transfers, savings, and other financial transactions.

Regulators and local private institutions can collaborate to create safe and accessible banking and credit instruments. That is how Brazil developed a regulatory framework that has enabled banks to build a network of 95,000 banking agents. As a result, an estimated 13 million Brazilians – in all of the country's nearly 5,600 municipalities, from the Amazon to the shanty-towns of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have been brought into the financial system.

BIZ BRIEFS



Wheels on fire

Hero MotoCorp, the world's largest two-wheeler manufacturer, has launched Hero motorbikes and scooters through NGM, its authorised distributor in Nepal. With a network of over 70 outlets across the country, expect to see the hottest two-wheelers taking your city by storm this Dasain.



Knowledge first

Wai Wai has launched Gyan Jyoti Pustakalya Yojana. Under this offer, coupons found in the noodles packets can be exchanged for books.



Real winners

Ideal Model School of Lalitpur won the 'Real School of Nepal-2012' contest organised by Dabur Nepal. Schools from all over Nepal had been competing against each other for the last two months for the grand final.

New friendship

McDowell's whisky has partnered with Ranipokhari Corner Team (RCT) and provide Rs 1 million sponsorship for a year.



Dasain bonanza



CG Electronics is offering buyers exciting gifts and cash prizes with its new festive scheme 'CG Dasain Kharcha'. Every week, two CG buyers will win Rs 50,000 through a lucky draw.

Celebrating togetherness

Coca Cola Nepal has launched its month long 'Come Home on Dashain' campaign offering Rs 10 off on 2.25 litre bottles of Coca-Cola, Sprite, and Fanta.



Festive offer



CG Automobiles, distributor of Suzuki four-wheelers, has launched its Dasain special called 'Suzuki Dasain bahar, rojne tapainko adhikar', for Suzuki Alto, K10, and Wagon R. Under this scheme customers can choose auto loan financing, or an on-road package that includes cash discount, road tax, insurance, and accessories.

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It has been a year since Marcos Borges Duprat Ribeiro arrived in Kathmandu to set up the new Brazilian embassy here, and in that time the artist-ambassador has blended seamlessly a passion for painting with his duties as a diplomat.

Duprat is a respected artist in Brazil with many international exhibitions, and has managed to not just combine two professions, but use his nomadic diplomatic job to influence his paintings with the landscapes and cultures of the places where

he has been posted.

At age 67, Duprat says he had returned to Brazil after serving in Tokyo and Washington and other capitals to finally settle down, take care of his family duties, work on paintings, and help set up a diplomatic museum in Rio de Janeiro.

"When the call from my minister came about opening an embassy in Kathmandu, I almost said no," Duprat admits, "I felt it was just too much of a challenge. But within two hours,

The art of diplomacy

Brazil ambassador Marcos Duprat feels Nepal is an ideal posting for an artist

I had called back and said yes."

The exotic aura of Kathmandu was just too much of a draw, something that had been with Duprat since the 1960s when, while studying in the United States, a lot of his friends visited Nepal and Bali and came back with fabulous tales.

But Duprat did not arrive in Kathmandu all starry eyed, ready to be awed by Shangri La. He started reading up on Nepal, getting briefings and he knew that it was a country in the throes of dramatic change and buffeted by change.

In the past year, as he passes the demolition along Lazimpat road every day, amidst all the rubble his artist's eye sees fleeting examples that the people of Kathmandu are still "linked to the old life, and their psyche is still stable".

But, says Duprat: "As much as



Hair for food

Cambodian mothers are selling their hair to feed their families

BORIN NOUN IN CAMBODIA

Touch Kanha, 30, watches her children play in a slum here in Phnom Bat, 50km from Cambodia's capital. The residents were evicted from homes to make way for apartments in the centre of the capital earlier this year, and conditions are so bad that women like Kanha are selling their hair to buy food.

"Sometimes my children go to bed hungry at night," says the 30-year-old Cambodian mother. "You can't do without food, so I had to sell my hair." Kanha cut her hair in January and sold it to a broker for \$20, who sells it to an exporter. By the time Kanha's hair makes it to a wig shop in the United States or Europe it will fetch anything up to \$3,000.

Once the hair is sold, the middleman brings it to a collection centre in Phnom Penh where they are cleaned, gathered into ponytails, rimmed to make them at least 20cm long, and secured with a plastic band. The United States alone imported \$1.3 million worth of raw human hair last year. Other importing countries are the UK and China.

China is also an exporter of human hair, with India, Philippines, and Cambodia. People in the West prefer human hair over synthetic to make wigs, extensions, and hair pieces because it can be dyed, heated, styled,

BAD HAIR DAY: Cambodian women from a slum near Phnom Penh regret cutting their hair, but say they had no choice.



BORIN NOUN

washed, and treated like natural hair. In North America, human hair extensions can cost up to \$500, and a wig can cost as much as \$3,000.

Around 100 women living in the camp here have sold their hair. The price of hair is based on its length and texture. Ros Sokunthear, 29 years, is a mother of four and she sold her hair four months ago. "I don't want to cut my hair short for hair brokers, but it's our only option if we want to send our children to school," she says.

But many here believe that selling hair will bring bad luck. In Khmer culture, long hair is considered a sign of beauty, and women who have sold their locks say short hair makes them look older.

Keo Sreang is Touch Kanha's husband. His wife asked for permission first before cutting and selling her hair. He agreed at the time, but now he feels bad. "It's a sin," he says, "but my wife has just delivered our baby, so we need money for medication and milk and she had to cut her hair off."

At the camp, community chief Chea Ny calls for support from the government to stop women from selling their hair.

"Poverty is driving us to sell our hair. If I get help, I won't cut my hair. But as things are, I will probably sell it again when my hair grows back," admits Sokunthear matter-of-factly.

www.asiacalling.org



BIKRAM RAI

you see the beauty all around, you see the beauty in danger. You see the architecture, the temples, the river, and you see so much that should be beautiful, but isn't."

Duprat took a personal interest in designing the interiors of the Brazilian chancery and residence in Chundevi, commissioning local wood carvers in Patan to make lattice windows and tables, bronze table stands and thangkas, and picking just the right design and colours of Tibetan carpets to go with them. The interior looks more like an art gallery than an embassy.

Being a painter also helps Duprat in his work, and allows him to meet Nepali writers, artists, sculptors, and photographers which ambassadors usually wouldn't otherwise. But he does have to drag himself away from the hectic social circuit to work on his own paintings, which he usually does in the evenings.

Duprat's paintings have a narrative of the interplay of light, and how it pervades the landscape outside and inside. Which is why many of his paintings are of wide-open windows, narrow doors, and entrances letting in only a chink of light. And then there are the landscapes of the mind, where Duprat explores how light interacts with water, pebbles, air, clouds, mountains, and horizons. The canvases almost emit a light of their own, they are still life and yet they have a

graceful fluidity.

Duprat studied art in Japan's Waseda University and later was posted to Tokyo, and naturally one sees the influence of the subdued tones and understated minimalism of Japanese landscape art. The most exquisite thing for Duprat is the light in Nepal, and this is already evident in some of the paintings he has done after arriving here.

Duprat's technique is velatura where artists use layer upon layer of paint which partly obscures the underlying paint, giving the works a misty, blurry effect that has a dreamlike quality.

Says Duprat: "Kathmandu Valley is blessed with a high level of refinement of the arts. The casting, woodwork, textiles all have an amazing sense of colour and design. Newari architecture has that delicate touch, it's not monumental and overpowering, but aesthetic and built to a human scale."

Asked if he will be having an exhibition in Kathmandu soon, Duprat says: "Paintings have a life of their own. As images, they come to life when they are seen by the viewer. I would love to share my work with the Nepali public and I am working on the details of an exhibition in Kathmandu next year."

Kunda Dixit

nepalitimes.com
Interview with Marcos Duprat, 'Brazil keen on hydropower', #599

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EVENTS



WCN NATURE AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION, take photos of flora, fauna, landscape, macro, and human interaction with nature to promote awareness and interest in conservation. *Deadline 31 October, forms available at www.wcn.org.np*

Photography workshop, Canon School of Imaging is offering amateurs an opportunity to enhance their skills and gain in-depth knowledge on the nuances of digital photography. *Rs4500, 1 to 10 October, 5.15 to 7.15 pm, Maitri Bhawan, New Road, 2083206, 2013186, workshop@canon-nepal.com, register by 30 September*



INDRA JATRA AT RED CARPET, celebrate one of the most cherished festivals in the Valley with traditional music, lakhey dances, homemade aila, Newari cuisine, and paintings by the renowned sculptor Vijay Maharjan. *Rs 350 for children, Rs 750 for adults, 28 September, 4 pm, Red Carpet Restro and Bar, Darbar Marg, 4257705*

Lalitpur business expo, featuring arts, handicraft, garments, agro products and the best from Lalitpur's commercial enterprises. *27 September to 2 October, 10 am to 6 pm, Jawalakhel Football Ground, 5005044*

Ekadeshma, the Manhattan Short Film festival comes to Nepal and will feature international as well as Nepali shorts and also discussions on film. *6 to 7 October, 12.30 pm to 7 pm, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap*

Mekclub dogathon, walk your canine companions from Tinkune to Babar Mahal and get free rabies tests for your dogs. *28 September, 7.30 am to 12 pm, Tinkune*



A GOOD TALK, Daniel Menaker who has been editor at Random House, Harper Collins and the New Yorker will give insight on the art of writing and editing. *2 to 3 October, 9 am to 12 pm, Union House, Anamnagar, 5536974, register by 28 September*

Corporate five-a-side futsal tournament, take your business rivalries to the pitch. *Rs 4500, 12 to 14 October, Futsal Arena, GAA Hall, Thamel, 9849718836, 9841817298*

Social entrepreneurship bazar 2012, sample the products, services, and ideas of social entrepreneurs from across Nepal and enjoy culinary delights and arts and music from across Asia. *4 to 6 October, 9 am to 4 pm, Babarmahal Revisited, 4462254, 9813198453, change4fusionnepal.org*



CYCLE FOR TOURISM, brave the heat and cycle for two days from Kathmandu to Sauraha on a tour led by cyclist Pushkar Shah in order to promote domestic tourism and cycling culture. *27 to 29 September, 9803607694, 9841876696, nepal.wcf@gmail.com*

Inheriting statelessness, an exhibition of paintings by Saroj Bajracharya along with the book launch of Future of History. *21 September to October 5, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 9803187665*

MUSIC

Paleti with Pawan Golay, be charmed by the soothing voice of this singer from Darjiling. *28 September, 5.30 pm, 4212469, 4412395, 9851026266, Nepalaya r-sala*

ROCK THE VALLEY, catch Nepali Rock legends Cobweb and various artists perform as an acoustic ensemble for the first time. *Rs300, 29 September, 6.30 pm, 1905 Restaurant, Thamel, 9841849786, 9801026507*



All Nepal battle of the bands, see if you can hit the right notes at this nation-wide music competition. *Rs5000, auditions on 6 October, 9841779176, 9803750550*

DINING



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

Thik Thak Restaurant, this restaurant boasts live fish from the lake which means the fish dishes are always fresh and delicious. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

New Dish, grab filling meals like pork momos, spring rolls and chop seyuys with excellent value for money. *Khichchapokhari*



SHANGRI-LA KITCHEN, cook your own Gyakok at this newly opened restaurant. *Hotel Tibet International, Boudha*

Yellow Chilli, enjoy renowned Indian chef Sanjeev Kapoor's signature Indian delicacies and variety of other mouthwatering delicacies. *Thapathali*



FUJI BAKERY, tucked in Chakupat this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat and banana cake. *Chakupat, Lalitpur*

Kotetsu, authentic Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. *Lazimpat*

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GETAWAYS

Saturday nights at Borderlands, spend the weekend at the riverside resort and treat yourself to live music, BBQ, and more. *Rs 2100, 29 September, 2 pm, Borderlands Eco Adventure, Sindhupalchok, 4381314, 4381425*

Hotel Heritage, enjoy the exquisite architecture and traditional ambience, but make sure to book your rooms online with NepalSutra. *Bhaktapur, 01-6611628, info@nepalsutra.com*



BALTHALI VILLAGE RESORT, a small, cosy retreat with a bird's eye view of the green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. *Balthali, Kabhre, 9851075818*



Amazing Amazon in Kathmandu

In 2010 the Colombian artist Nicolas Van Hemelrick decided to take a bike ride to the source of the Amazon River and from there began a five-month journey to its delta in the Atlantic Ocean. The images of what he saw along the way are being exhibited over the weekend in Kathmandu in a show brought here by the Colombian Embassy. The exhibition 'Amazing Amazon' explores the unique way of life from the rainforest, the so-called 'lungs of the world'. Consultant for the exhibit, Prasiit Sthapit, says: "We rarely get to see images from South America, apart from what's on tv. The nature in Nepal and Colombia have a lot in common, they are very diverse." The exhibition has already toured India, stopping at Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai in 2010. After Nepal, 'Amazing Amazon' will be heading to Bangladesh.

The exhibition runs from 29-30 of September at The Park Gallery in Pulchok, Lalitpur, 5522307

Vo'yage



Thank the lord of monsoon on Indra Jatra by joining the biggest party in town at Basantapur Darbar Square this Sunday. First, take a leisurely stroll from Kumari Temple through Ason to Indrachok and work up an appetite. Then join rest of the devotees, masked dancers, and fellow partiers in front of the Taleju Temple for a massive Newari feast served on traditional leaf plates by a group of abused Newari housewives turned businesswomen while drinking copious amounts of aila and thwo.

30 September, tour starts at 2.30 pm and the feast begins from 6.30 pm onwards
Feast and tour: Rs 1,500
Feast only: Rs 850
Children below ten: half price
Children below four: free
For tickets: info@socialtours.com or voye@socialtours.com 4412508

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SOMEPLACE ELSE

A dining experience at the Hyatt is guaranteed to be one that is decadent, hedonistic, and always delicious. When you eat here, you are doing more than just feeding your stomach: you are reveling in delights that pander to all your senses. With the change in season, the Rox Restaurant, the hotel's signature outlet, has introduced a new menu, which while retaining the perennial favourites, hosts a dazzling array of new dishes. We started our meal with the Spanish Garlic Soup (Rs 695), a thick creamy bowl of goodness that is nourishing, comforting, and also very healthy. The taste of garlic is not overpowering, but manages to be a subtle essence that imbues the soup with flavour. It was the perfect start to our meal and a tantalising peek into the



gustatory wonders that awaited us. The thick sweet delight of the Pan Seared Trio of Scallops with Blue Cheese (Rs 1,600) was so good that I wanted a whole plate filled with them. The Blueberry Risotto with smoked duck breast and mascarpone cheese (Rs 1,350) did not disappoint. A substantial amount of rice on which nestled slices of sweet smoky and succulent duck breast with skin that had just the right amount of crackle and crunch to it, I have to say this is among the best risottos I have tasted in my entire life. The next dish to be plated



Sicilian Ratatouille and butter caper sauce (Rs 1,750) had me in moans of ecstasy with each bite. I am not a keen fish eater having been subjected to virulent attacks of food poisoning after eating said piscine, but after this meal I have been eating fish everywhere I go. Like they say, there is no greater devotee than she who has re-found faith and food is my religion. The Australian Lamb Shanks (Rs 2,100) come with the creamiest mashed potatoes (I do not want to think about the amount of butter in that) and rosemary jus. While the shanks were a little dry for my taste



PICS: PRAMOD SHRESTHA

up for us was the Wheat Pasta Napolitana with fresh basil (Rs 1,300) which like it sounds was wholesome and healthy. While there is nothing wrong with healthy, I was at Rox to groan in pleasure with each bite and the Himalayan Rainbow Trout with

and thus chewy, the reduction of the sweet sauce for the jus was amazing. By this time my mind was saying no, but my body was telling me otherwise. This feast had to end on a sweet note and what notes they were. The Mango Panna Cotta with almond snap (Rs 850) was suitably delicious, but Rox has spoilt Tiramisu from everywhere else for me forever. Because no Tiramisu in the Valley is going to come even close to the one they serve here. Dished up in a martini glass, the Classical Tiramisu (Rs 875) is an authentic mixture of mascarpone cheese and egg yolk layered alternatively with finger bread soaked in coco and amaretto liqueur topped with coffee powder and chocolate-coated almonds. Rox is expensive, there is no denying that. It isn't somewhere I would go too often, for I can't afford it, but if you are rich why would you want to eat anywhere else? For the rest of us, it's perfect for a celebratory lunch or dinner where you want to go all out and splurge on a meal you'll be relishing and talking about for months. I did away with my rating system recently but if I hadn't, I would have awarded all ten 'forks' to the executive chef, Subrata Debnath. Well done, sir, well done. Pramod Shrestha

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Eyes Wide Shut



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Stanley Kubrick's last film is a grand old mystery. Released in 1999 a few months after Kubrick's death, *Eyes Wide Shut* created a great deal of controversy, with its erotic subject matter, the byzantine plot, and endless speculation that had Kubrick lived longer the film would have been somehow different.

Kubrick had the reputation like some auteurs such as Kar Wai Wong (*Chungking Express*, *In The Mood For Love*) of endlessly refining and editing his films, so in some ways the speculation is valid, but the nature of the film is such that one doubts if there can be any one definitive interpretation.



A master of cinema, yet often misunderstood in his day, Kubrick wrote, produced, and directed his final film on a shoot that took a record 400 days. During this period Nicole Kidman who plays Alice Harford and Tom Cruise who plays her husband Dr William "Bill" Harford were more or less sequestered away from the world with Kubrick. They spoke of their experience working with him as rewarding, but also harrowing. The couple were also married in real life at the time and separated in 2001.

There are many ways to view this film in retrospect more than a decade after its release - Tom Cruise's ardent affiliation with the cult like religion of Scientology being one of them. His most recent wife Katie Holmes 'escaped' from their five year

long marriage amidst media speculation that she didn't want their daughter Suri brought up under any kind of influence of the secretive Church of Scientology.

In the film, Cruise's character, Dr Bill, a handsome successful general practitioner finds himself gate crashing a cult like ritual in a mansion just outside of Manhattan after a swanky Christmas party where he meets an old friend and medical school drop out who now plays piano and is occasionally summoned, with a secret password, to these clandestine events where everyone is masked and where the men are clothed, but the women are stark naked.

There has been more endless speculation that Kubrick was emulating Masonic rituals or perhaps even the shadowy Illuminati made famous by *The Da Vinci Code*, but what is most striking in hindsight is the uncanny coincidence of Cruise's character being caught up in a sinister cult that veers him away from his lovely wife and his picture perfect life.

It is, of course, unfair to speculate in this way about the private life of actors, even as it is impossible not to draw the above admittedly disturbing parallel. But then, the entire film carries a heavy and sinister atmosphere that makes for this exact kind of conspiracy theory like speculation.

Directed by the hand of a master, Kidman and Cruise carry the complex overtones of the film as best they can. Sometimes heavy handed in their acting, one still must applaud how they gamely take on one particularly long, torturous conversation scene with just the two of them intensely discussing the urge to cheat, even in a happy marriage, all the while under the influence of marijuana.

As Tom Cruise's character flounders through his nightmarish evening (the sinister events take place over two nights, but they seem melded into one long one) he runs the course of lust, and comes back to his wife and home, guilty and

ready to confess.

Meanwhile Alice, herself no innocent, has had portentous, uncannily similar dreams of herself being naked among many powerful men.

In the end, we never know what really happened, and whether any of it was even real. Regardless of this, it is fascinating to be a viewer to such a powerful artifact of cinema that holds a mesmerising power years after it was released, still leaving much speculation in its wake.

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer



Mistaken identity



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

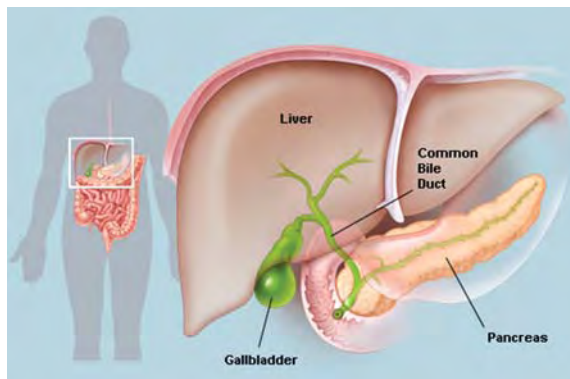
Typhoid is a major killer specially in our part of the world. 300,000 people around the world die from this illness every year and 27 million are infected.

Understanding the transmission cycle of the bacteria is imperative to battle this deadly disease.

When a patient is cured of typhoid fever, there is some likelihood that she will 'carry' the typhoid bacteria, called salmonella. Salmonella in these asymptomatic 'carriers' stays in the gall bladder and intermittently with the bile which flows from the gall bladder, enters the intestines and exits in the faeces to set up a faecal-oral typhoid transmission cycle.

In a surprising finding from Patan Hospital that will soon be published in an open-access journal, *PLoS One*, Sabina Dongol and colleagues show that the salmonella that leaves the gall bladder in 'carriers'

may not be the culprit causing the acute 'blood' infection in another person as was previously assumed. This salmonella carrier study done from 2007 to 2010 at Patan Hospital had a large sample size of 1,377 patients who required gall bladder surgery, mostly for gall stone problems. About four per cent of the bile from this group grew out salmonella from the bile culture.



WEB MD

The study revealed that the gall bladder salmonella and the prevalent acute typhoid fever causing salmonella appear to be two different strains as verified by microbiological and genetic studies. This mistaken identity is vital in the context of the spread of typhoid fever.

Prevailing dogma in tropical medicine states that it is the carrier who maintains this active

transmission of the bacteria from person to person, but the Patan Hospital study findings counter this dogma. In a high-typhoid transmission area like ours, 'carrier' transmission seems to play a secondary role. In sharp contrast, in low typhoid transmission areas as in the Western world, it is well-established that whenever there is a typhoid outbreak, a 'carrier' is often identified and both the patient and the carrier (often a cook or a food handler) will be infected by a similar strain. So has Typhoid Mary been vindicated?

Typhoid Mary was a typhoid 'carrier' in the early twentieth century in New York who was implicated in infecting many people with typhoid in different households where she worked. Recent studies appear to question Mary's culpability in spreading this illness given that at that time New York (unlike now) was a relatively high transmission area for typhoid akin to Nepal today.

If the 'carrier' transmission is less important than was previously believed, having access to clean drinking water, using soap to wash hands and an overall improvement in sanitation (besides vaccination) will be more important in preventing typhoid infection.



BIKRAM RAI

DEAR STUDENTS: Senior leader of CPN-Maoist Krishna Bahadur Mahara addresses the audience during a program organised by the party's student wing at Basantapur on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

NIGHTMARE ENDS: French mountaineers arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu and meet their travel agents after being rescued in Manaslu on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

MAKE A TOAST: As part of World Tourism Day celebrations women show a curious passerby how to make traditional Newari alcohol at Kathmandu Darbar Square on Wednesday.

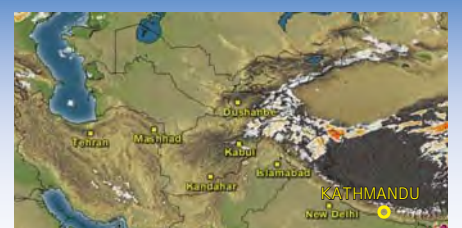


ANUP ADHIKARI

READERS' PHOTO: Instead of playing with her friends, a schoolgirl helps her family sell oil lamps in front of Swayambhunath stupa.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The wind has turned, and the westerlies have asserted themselves over Nepal, pushing the monsoon moisture right back to the Bay of Bengal. A high pressure dominates most of the Indo-Gangetic belt as seen in this unusually cloudless satellite image taken on Thursday at noon. There is a low pressure circulation brewing in the sea off Orissa, and depending on the strength of the westerlies we could see it affecting eastern Nepal early next week. But for the weekend, expect hazy mornings with a slight nip in the air giving way to hot and sunny afternoons. There will be localised buildups along the mountains with brief showers. But Kathmandu Valley for the most part will be hot and humid, with only a slight afternoon breeze to ease things a bit.



FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY



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Barking up the wrong tree

The frustrated opposition is once again preparing to take to the streets, but what do they really want?



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

Last week when the parties had come with an 'agreement' to go for fresh elections, we were all skeptical about it here at *Nepali Times*. Without a front-loaded deal on outstanding constitutional issues, most importantly on federalism, we felt, it was only a matter of time before the parties hit a brick wall. And they did.

There is nothing new in this new drama. The Big Four wasted four months in a rhetorical war, practically without talking to each other. The president twisted their tails. The public started ridiculing them. So they came up with the election to defuse the pressure, but many forgot that Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had already announced elections on 27 May to extend his term in office.

The hard truth is that electing another CA will only provide the country with a vehicle without a political destination. Although the Maoist-Madhesi alliance and the NC-UML led opposition seem to agree in the new constitution on power sharing between directly-elected and parliament-elected executive as well as federating the country into provinces, they differ fundamentally on the details.

So when leaders in the opposition claim that there is no difference on constitutional issues and blame the Bhattarai government for not making way for a national unity government, they are being deceitful. They hold Bhattarai responsible for what happened on 27 May, but after the Supreme Court decision, the opposition had already contemplated the CA's natural death as a way to get rid of the Maoist-Madhesi diktat in the constitution drafting. A senior NC leader who had lobbied for the CA extension until the last moment admitted as much in a private conversation.

The opposition had hoped that the president would force Bhattarai to resign and call for fresh parliamentary elections. But Bhattarai outsmarted them by declaring CA elections at 11:30 PM, half an hour before the house was dissolved. A sulking opposition took to the streets and frequented Shital Niwas in an effort to unseat Bhattarai. But after gauging the nation's pulse and consulting various constitutional and legal experts, President Ram Baran Yadav chose not to overstep his constitutional jurisdiction even though he turned down the full budget and several ordinances to remind Bhattarai that he was only a caretaker.

The opposition had no option but to come back to the table, which they did last week. But the way they have sidelined the constitutional issues and focused only on government change,

it seems they are not so keen on resolving the deadlock and forging agreement on sticking issues than they are to get to power.

The NC has both the credibility and experience in holding free and fair elections. But at a time when the rationale for going to elections is being contested, it is the responsibility of all parties to first figure out why a consensus was elusive before and what has changed to make a deal on the constitution

possible now. For the last four months, the leaders have been blaming the CA for failing to draft the constitution, but the valuable work done by the House that still exists in the form of a draft proves nothing is further from the truth. The House had its rules which allowed a democratic solution to all the problems. It is the political leadership which undermined the spirit of democracy by making and

breaking backroom deals and bypassing the elected assembly.

The political parties need to reinvent themselves through fresh elections, but the nation cannot go for polls in this socio-politically polarised environment. The opposition is preparing for a street show against the government because it considers Bhattarai the biggest obstacle, but it is really barking up the wrong tree.

If the NC-UML want to

lead the electoral government, they must convince the silent majority who still stand by the present coalition, that they uphold the spirit of the 2006 Jana Andolan as well as Janajati and Madhes movements which called for political as well as social restructuring of the state. They can begin by convincing those in their own ranks and preventing the exodus of Madhesi and Janajati leaders from their parties. ■



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As Nepal's population ages, thousands of elderly Nepalis find themselves orphaned

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Every morning 77-year-old Sarmaya Acharya (*pic, centre*) neatly lays out packets of cigarettes and chewing tobacco, shampoo sachets, and nail polish bottles and sets up her small stall at Bhanu Chok in Dharan. The mother of two lives by herself and uses earnings from the shop to pay her monthly rent.

Sarmaya's son is settled in Kathmandu, and abandoned her shortly after her husband's death and hasn't come to see her in three years. She has never met her daughter-in-law, or her grandchildren.

Thousands of 60 plus Nepalis across the country find themselves orphaned at old age. Abandoned by their families, they are forced to spend their retirement years in old age homes, on the streets or in their own residence with no one to look after them.

Joint families with grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins all living under the same roof were the norm in Nepal till even a decade ago. Older members



SABITRI BARAL, 77, KASKI

"All my life I took care of my daughter and then my four granddaughters. But one day they all kicked me out. Since then I have lived at Devghat and worked as a gardener in a hotel in Pokhara. Now I am at this old age home, but neither my daughter who is quite well-off, nor my granddaughters who are in Japan, Australia, and Kathmandu seem to care."

GIVING UP ON GRANNIES



were respected and valued, and played a vital role in the transfer of knowledge, skills, and traditions. In an economy so heavily reliant on agriculture, it made sense for families to stick together because grandparents would help raise children, while parents worked on the farm.

While the democracy movement in 1990 brought about major political and economic changes, it also ruptured this social contract. The economy

expanded, new jobs opened up in the manufacturing and services sector, and many flocked to the cities. The decade long civil war hastened this trend, and elderly family members were left behind. With more and more Nepalis opting to work and settle abroad, the number of abandoned aged parents is likely to rise.

The middle class urban lifestyle, nuclear families living in cramped rented quarters, and

premium on personal freedom and financial independence over customs, have brought about a significant change in attitude.

"Grandparents were shown a lot of respect and well-loved by families, but that culture has slowly faded away. We are so busy running after money and making a name for ourselves, we have forgotten some of our good social values," explains sociologist Suresh Dhakal.

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SOHAN SHRESTHA

Pressures of modern life mean that many Nepalis don't even have the time or energy to take care of their children, so looking after aged parents becomes an economic and emotional burden. The average family size in Nepal has shrunk from 5.4 in 2001 to 4.7, and the capital has an even smaller family size of 3.7. While the poor elderly are the most vulnerable, there have been many cases where well-off

parents have been kicked out after handing over their property to their children, or after being coerced into giving up their wealth. According to the 1991 census, there were 1,071,000 Nepalis above the age of 60. In two decades that has doubled to 2,351,000 as Nepal's population ages. Senior citizens now make up nine per cent of the country's population. In many developed

SAMBHU PRASAD ACHARYA, 74, BIRATNAGAR

"I spent all the earnings from my job in the police force on our sons' weddings. We even sold our house and gave them all the money. But when we asked one of them to take care of me and the other to look after my wife, they refused. Now they don't even want to build a house because they are worried they will have to take us in. I had no other option than to send my wife to her parents' home in Kathmandu and I have been living at the Birateshor old age home for the past four years. I wish I could spend the last few years of my life with my wife."

HARILAL POUDEL, 68, SYANGJA

"My only son left for India 22 years ago and since then I have not been in touch with him and don't know his whereabouts. When it became hard for me to look after myself I asked my six daughters to come live with me. They said no. When I went to their house they refused to accept me and one of my grandsons abandoned me at Prithvi Chok in Pokhara. After that I wanted to end my life by jumping in the Seti, but an acquaintance found me and brought me to an old age home."

HARI SHRESTHA, 63, KATHMANDU

"I have been living alone ever since the death of my wife two years ago. All my sons live separately and I think nuclear family is a necessity of modern life. I moved from Bhojpur to Kathmandu 30 years ago to start my career as a professor. I wanted to bring my parents along, but they couldn't leave. It is better to live separately and be happy rather than living together with resentment, and I have accepted my lifestyle."

till she is physically capable. Although life has been cruel to her, she carries on with the hope of seeing her son and grandchildren one day. With additional reporting by: Sohan Shrestha, Kamal Rimal, Chaabi Magar, and Ramesh Kumar

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Home away from home, #594
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NEPAL SPORTS COUNCIL

Lost in London

Dipendra Gurung,
Naya Patrika, 21 September

गयाँ पत्रिका

News of Nepali officials who go ‘missing’ abroad has become quite common. The 2012 London Paralympics was no different. Out of the 20 officials who accompanied athletes Maiya Bisunkhe and Bikram Bahadur Rana to London, nine still haven’t returned although the official return date was 10 September. While the names of the four ‘missing’ people have

been revealed, Nepal National Paralympics Committee is yet to identify the remaining five. One of the athletes said they did not know many of the officials and met them for the first time at London. According to the athlete, most administrators arrived in the UK before them and left the Olympics village long before the games were over. On top of the missing members, Nepalis have to cope with another embarrassment. The National Paralympics Committee isn’t even sure

about the exact number of officials who travelled to the UK. A picture of the Nepali team at the Paralympics reveals that a British national and two children also took part in the opening ceremony. However, none of these ‘extra’ people have been identified. “Although we had officially recommended eight people, we have been informed the actual numbers were higher, but we don’t know the full details yet,” said a committee official.

Flying high



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Ganesh Basnet, *Rajdhani*, 23 September

राजधानी

Young, unemployed, gang members, criminals, these are the stereotypes that come to mind when we think of drug addicts. But a growing number of health care providers and pilots are joining this notorious list. A recent investigation carried out by the Department of Drug Administration (DDA) found a doctor and pilot guilty of misusing buprenorphine, a painkiller. According to SSP Nawaraj Silwal, the two were found with other illegal drugs like tidigesic and phenergan. The nurses who gave the DDA officials the lead were also found misusing the drugs with the doctor. The convicted doctor said he began taking the drugs to reduce stress. “I wanted to use it only once, but now I cannot get out of the habit,” he admitted. The pilot who is a former drug addict said he had remained clean for years before relapsing a few months back upon his return from the Philippines. His family weren’t aware about his situation before the police took him into custody. He has been released on the condition of being admitted to a rehabilitation centre.

Congress under the influence

NC leader GaganThapa in
Kantipur, September 24

कान्तिपुर

When the leaders do not have answers to the political deadlock, the best option is to go for a fresh mandate and the parties have made the right decision. In a democracy, no clause in the constitution can stop the people from reasserting themselves. But for the elections to take place, the top four political forces must first include smaller parties in the ongoing dialogue and forge a common understanding on the rationale of the elections, date, and the size of the next CA or parliament. But even before that it is important for the parties to decide who will lead the



electoral government? In the aftermath of the CA dissolution, the NC has been rightly criticised as a disoriented and confused party. Despite huge expectations, the leadership has clearly failed to present its case to lead the country at this critical juncture.

Internally, the top brass has disregarded established norms of seeking mandate from the party’s representative body and has been making arbitrary decisions in the name of the party. A few leaders have been keeping the party hostage to their personal ambitions and making back door deals to accommodate each other’s interests. But their failure to provide a visionary leadership, and engage the opposition shows that the days of coterie politics in the NC are over. There is an urgent need to democratise the party’s internal structure and decision-making process. Only a strong NC free from the control of the few can influence national politics.

Bound underground

Durgalal KC, *Kantipur*, 22 September

कान्तिपुर

Their day starts at 5am. They get up, have a quick meal, put on their uniforms and head to work 500 metres into the earth. When they come back to the surface after a gruelling day at the office, they are completely covered in soot and unrecognisable. This is the daily routine for hundreds of Dalit and Magar youths from Ramche, Tos, Tampani, Tisrang, and Bayalikot of Saigha VDC in northern Dang who spend their entire lives in coal mines. Mining in Saigha started in 1990, the same year when the Panchayat system gave way to multiparty democracy. There have been plenty of changes in the country since then, but prospects have remained just as bleak for the inhabitants of Saigha.



DURGALAL KC

The miners are paid Rs 50 per quintal and on average they extract up to six sacks of coal each day. “It’s a hard life. We spend the entire day in total darkness searching for coal,” explains Tej Bahadur Thapa of Ramche. Despite putting his life at risk every day, the rewards are paltry. He manages to scrap out a living and feed his family, but it’s a hand to mouth existence.

Amrit Nepali of Tisrang shares a similar story. With his meagre income Nepali can either send his children to school or feed his family of seven. It’s a tough choice. “If I send my children to school, there is not enough to eat. So they also help out,” he admits.

Safety standards in the six mines in Saigha are almost non-existent. Tunnels may collapse anytime burying the miners alive. There are no lighting systems or mechanised trolleys to ferry the load. And the workers are neither insured nor do they receive any medical benefits. Dal Singh Sunar of Bayalikot says he and his friends are terrified every time they head into the pits because they’re not sure whether they will come back alive. He says, “If a miner has an accident, the others won’t find out till much later because it’s so dark in there.” For coal miners like Sunar, Nepali, and Thapa, life underground as well as above ground is dark and grimy.



Sushil Koirala: Move, let me drive.
Pushpa Kamal Dahal: No, I will drive.
Car: Electoral government
Arrow: Election

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 23 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Don’t run after what I say in public because I have to say lot of things that I don’t mean to keep the opposition engaged. You must trust that all our actions have long term motive of capturing the state. ”

UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal quoted in *Jana Aastha*, September 25

INSULT TO INJURY

The lifelong pension scheme for war victims and ex-combatants has turned into a scam

RAMESWOR BOHARA and DIRGHA RAJ UPADHYA

When Krishna Kathayat of Darna came to district headquarters in Achham in July to collect his disability pension, Chief District Officer Ram Kurumbang and officials at the Local Peace Committee did not know what to make of Kathayat. The Ministry of Peace had put him under the '100 per cent' disabled category and his papers said he was immobile with a missing arm and ear. But Kurumbang saw nothing unusual except a slightly crooked arm with a small lump at the elbow. No one could question Kathayat because he had all the necessary documents. So he collected his four months worth of pension amounting to Rs 24,800 and walked back home.

Similarly, Arjun Prasad Poudel of Bhorle in Rasuwa district went to the headquarters to claim his pension. He told the officials that he had become blind after the army beat him during the war. When the officials asked him to remove his glasses, they found out he was lying. Poudel then claimed he couldn't hear. His name is now being removed from the list of the conflict-hit.

Seven months after the government started the lifelong pension scheme for war victims and ex-combatants, the full extent of corruption and deceit is finally emerging as more and more scam cases are revealed. From medical reports to victims' stories to the disability criteria used by the state, everything is forged.

"People paralysed before the war and even those who fell from trees have papers to prove they are war victims. When they present these 'authentic' documents, we have no other option than to provide the pension," admits Jora Singh Bista, secretary of Achham's Local Peace Committee.



RAMESWOR BOHARA

PRIMARY CLASS: Policeman Dev Bahadur Thapa (left) of Rolpa has been put in the 'primary' category despite his immobilising spinal injury. Dipendra Pun Magar (right), who lost his arm while setting off a bomb in Palpa, is also in the same category.

In November 2011, the Maoist-led cabinet formed a committee headed by Krishna Regmi to collect data about ex-combatants wounded during the war, and help with the rehabilitation process. Three months later, the cabinet announced a rehabilitation and support manual without waiting for the committee's recommendations. Maoist fighters, war victims, and families, as well as those injured during the 2006 Jana Andolan and the Madhes Uprising, who are deemed to be '51 per cent or more' disabled, became eligible for the lifelong pension and health care services.

The manual also divided the disabled into two categories: special and first. People with 76 to 100 per cent disability, who cannot walk without support fall under the 'special' category and receive Rs 6,200 as monthly stipend, and their caretakers also get the same amount. Those with 51 to 75 per cent disability who cannot earn a living are in the 'primary' category get Rs 6,200 every month. Out of the 736 beneficiaries, 446 are Maoist cadres while others are mostly Maoist supporters or family members.

An incriminating report by the Relief and Rehabilitation Department of the Ministry of Peace reveals that 319 out of 446 former fighters have disabilities lower than 50 per cent and are ineligible to receive pension. In fact, even people with 20 to 25 per cent disability have been found to possess fake papers that describe them as 100 per cent disabled. Ministry officials estimate that almost 60 per cent of those currently receiving pensions have fabricated their documents in one way or another.

"We thought the pension was for people on wheelchairs or those who cannot function without caretakers. But the ones who come to collect money are actually quite healthy, some are even strong enough to beat us," explains Kailash Kumar Bajimaya, Chief District Officer of Kailali. After Bajimaya told six frauds about the legal consequences they could face, all of them begged to be 'demoted' to the lower category.

The government has spent more than Rs 22 million till date and will have to dole out Rs 74 million every year for the pensions. This figure is likely to rise to Rs 67 billion if life-expectancy rates are included in calculations.

The cadres who were not lucky enough to make it to the list expressed their dissatisfaction during the party's seventh plenum in July. Krishna Regmi admitted to making mistakes and suggested that new beneficiaries should be added to the list. Instead of removing fake pensioners, the Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, is now planning to expand the list.

However, former minister Rakam Chemjong is highly skeptical of the process and says, "We had already finished collecting the data two years ago and now there are more people claiming to be conflict victims. This program is quickly turning into a 'cadre-conservation' scheme."

The ministry has recommended 418 people to be added to the list, but the actual number is higher. According to latest figures, 17,831 people have died, 79,603 displaced, 16,227 lost their property, 8,151 are disabled, 1,735 injured, 505 have been orphaned, 1,505 are missing, 1,831 are in prison, and 3,167 were kidnapped. All of them could pressurise the government to provide compensation. The ministry has already received 10,000 applications, and thousands of files at district headquarters across the country remain to be investigated.

Rather than providing much needed financial relief to the victims of war, the Maoists seem to be using the lifelong pension scheme to run the state exchequer dry.

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Wonders never cease in this **Brand New Secular Federal Inclusive Demographic Ex-Monarchy of Greater Nepal** as we prepare to declare war on the Indian Subcontinent. Since nationalism is the last refuge of scoundrels, off go the Kranti-curries deporting Indian vehicles with Indian plates (Indian vehicles with Nepali plates are a-ok), banning Bollywood movies, and Hindi songs. CPji and the Kiran Kaka haven't forgiven the Indians for the bad jail food they got in Chennai and Siliguri during the war at a time when PKD, BRB, Sita, and Yummy were slurping Kwality Ice Cream in Noida.

If we had all read carefully the Bracket Baddies' 70-point demand last month, we can't say we weren't warned that Comrade Pumpa wanted us all to start digging trenches and tunnels again. It was all there in black and white. And red.



But why are Baidya Ba and Pumpa satisfied with only banning movies and songs? We have to be much more aggressive and add more items to the list if we are to effectively counter the **comprador ruling classes, running dog lackeys of imperialism, revisionist fascist hyenas, and capitalist**

traitors to the proletariat who connive with their hegemonistic masters in Delhi. To set an example, Baidya Ba has said he is ready to extract his Indian corneal transplant, and replace it with a Nepali one at Til Ganga. Nepal Time is only 15 minutes ahead of Indian Standard Time, and that puts us too close for comfort, so Nepalis should reset their clocks to be at least four hours ahead of Indian time. We also don't like to be so near to India anymore, Nepal should physically relocate itself further afield, say, to the Caribbean. And here is a longer checklist of Indian thingies that the Bracket Baddies should ban with immediate effect if they are really serious about this:

- Salt
- Petrol, diesel, gas
- 80 megawatts of electricity
- Home-made guns
- Wedding saris
- Pan Parag
- Gladioli
- Sai Baba
- Devnagari script
- Kurta suruwals
- Tandoori chicken
- Yoga
- Migratory birds
- Monsoon rains



Never thought the Ass would live to see the day that Baidya



Ba would get into bed with Jhusil, Jhallu and Co. But there they were the other day, knoodling cosily together as if they were joined at the hip, united by their determination to get the Baboo to go.



Didn't know the economic crisis was so bad. Comes word that Canada and Great Britain have decided to merge their embassies around the world to save money. Makes sense, since they both share a head of state and all that, eh? Which must be giving PM BRB ideas, since he once said during an unguarded moment that Nepal and India could be merged. Later, when the **guano hit the fan**, he said he

actually meant "submerged". In hindsight, it isn't a bad idea for Nepal to also follow the Anglo-Canadian example and start by merging Nepali and Indian embassies around the world. Look at all the benefits: we save money, our diplomats don't have the hassles of dealing with migrant worker problems, we can sell our Kensington Palace Gardens embassy in London and use the \$\$\$ to build Upper Tamakosi, we could recall all our ambassadors and get them to work in the passport office to reduce the lines outside Naryanhiti.



It's getting really difficult these days to tell which are the badder baddies: the opposition Baddies who threaten to bring the country to a halt, or the Baddies in government who threaten to bring the country to a halt. This is the only country in the world where the parties in government take to the streets to protest against the opposition. It is the only country where the Prime Minister openly declares that he is not in charge, and that "someone else has the keys".



One has to feel for BRB, though, since he has surrounded himself

with a menagerie of ministers each more crooked than the next. His cabinet is made up of a junketing **Minister of Women and Children** who thinks his job is to take his wife and children on phoren trips, a **Moonie Minister** whose sole interest is to propagate the Unification Church, a **Healthy Minister** who collected a couple of corrodes to replace the head of Patan Hospital with a crony's niece, a **Deforestation Minister** who is on the payroll of illegal loggers, and the **Sporty Ministry** which got 20 officials to accompany a two-member Para Olympic delegation to London and only nine of the officials came back. then the **Financial Minister** goes to China to negotiate an airport deal in which his sidekick admitted to taking a 50 lack kickback. and last but not least, the **Minister of Disinformation and Miscommunication** says all Nepali journo's will get life-long pension when they complete 50 years in the profession. Good move, given the lifespan of an average hack, they'll all be dead by then.



Kamred Oily got so carried away in his anti-Baddie tirade the other day he called them "**mad donkeys**". Watch your mouth, KP.




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