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NEPALI Times

#671 30 August - 5 September 2013 20 pages Rs 50



We could ram through an election in November, but the question remains: can a new Constituent Assembly not represented by all major political forces ensure peace and a new constitution? With the same leadership and behaviour witnessed in the first CA, a majority of Nepalis are doubtful that the new assembly will be any different. For former Chief Election Commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel, the lesson from the 2008 poll is that political preparedness and necessary political will are more important than technical and logistical issues. Just like this bulldozer widening the road outside the BICC, the peace process is still a work in progress.

PAGE 16-17

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COLOURFUL CAPITAL

Artistic murals have replaced political slogans on Kathmandu's streets

PAGE 11



WORK IN PROGRESS



BIKRAM RAI

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FROZEN GRIEF

Not having a missing relative present is ever-present pain for families of the thousands who were disappeared during the conflict



BHRIKUTI RAI

Some wars just go on and on, others simmer as low-intensity conflicts, there are wars where one side wins, and there are wars in which everyone loses. Afghanistan hasn't enjoyed peace since the 1970s. The Philippines has the world's longest running Maoist insurgency. In Sri Lanka, there was a clear victor and vanquished after the Tamil Tigers were defeated in May 2009. Nepal's decade-long conflict ended in 2006, both sides won, and they are now the government. One could say the king lost and the Nepali people suffered great loss, but the former enemies are now comfortably ensconced in positions of power and influence. The most striking symbol of this was the investiture ceremony this week of the 70 Maoist guerrillas who were inducted as officers of the Nepal Army. There was the Commander in Chief of the Nepal Army sitting alongside the commander of the Maoist People's Liberation Army watching a smart parade by the new cadets at Kharipati. There was a price that the nation paid for the assimilation of the armies and it isn't just the Rs 20 billion in mostly taxpayers' money that the demobilisation of the Maoists has cost so far. We continue to pay the price of impunity. Most of the 17,000 killed, 1,500 disappeared, and tens of thousands injured and displaced were civilians, and for many of the survivors the war never ended. However, as far as the former rebels and the security forces are concerned, the conflict is over and done with. The politicians and the Maoists in the four-party cartel running this country are too engrossed in sharing the spoils of power to care much about the victims of conflict and their relatives. In fact, there is a blatant and deliberate attempt by the warring sides to sweep conflict-era atrocities under the carpet. Examples abound and the most recent is

the shameful treatment, by the state, of the parents of Krishna Adhikari who was murdered in Chitwan. The previous Maoist government actively colluded with state security to hide the dirty business of each other's past. The death squads that ran the Bhairabnath facility have been promoted and the perpetrators of the summary execution of 18 captured Maoists at Doramba exactly 10 years ago were never punished. In the case of enforced disappearances, even when the guilty are known by name and complaints have been filed against them, governments have tried to pass the buck to the as yet non-existent commissions on truth and reconciliation and disappearances. As the world marks the International Day of the Disappeared on 30 August, relatives of those who were disappeared in the Nepal conflict are pressing for truth, justice, and compensation (see page 4-5). Not having a missing relative present continues to be an ever-present pain. This burden of ambiguous loss is multiplied among thousands of families across the country who need recognition of their suffering, information on the fate of the missing relative, and support to get on with their lives. Because it was mainly men who were disappeared, it is the women who need help because of the added burden of social stigma. In Bardiya, the district where the highest number of people were disappeared during the conflict, Laxmi Devi Khadka and Devisara Oli have set up a network of mothers and wives of the disappeared. Khadka's husband was disappeared by the Maoists and Oli's by the police. If these two women can come together out of shared grief to work together, what a shame that the so-called leaders of this country who caused that pain are conspiring to prolong it for the families of the disappeared.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

FISTFUL OF DOLLARS

Thank you *Nepali Times* for connecting the dots on the ban of wide-body aircrafts in TIA and its effect on tourism and migrant labour as well as the dollar escalation ('For a fistful of dollars', Editorial, #670). Unfortunately, we can't do anything about the dollar because of the Indian peg and the disadvantages of unpegging outweigh the advantages. But the government has shown sheer incompetence with its mishandling of the runway.

Buddy

- Nepal's economy is taking a nosedive, but what are our economists doing? Nepal pegging its currency with the Indian rupee was a good idea until our neighbour's economy was experiencing a boom. However, there is an urgent need to review our monetary policy by either making it independent or pegging it with another currency (maybe the US dollar) so that we can get rid of huge deficit.

Chhavi Pandey

- I won't be surprised if the dollar passes the Rs 200 mark in the next few months. The ones who have stashed dollars will probably go exchange or sell them in the black market and the ones who get paid in dollars couldn't have asked for a better gift right before Dasain.

Sameer Karki

- An insightful and well-written article by Ashoka Mody on the

downfall of the Indian economy and currency ('The mighty fall', #670). As Mody points out in the last part, the depreciated IRs will help make Indian exports cheaper in the market, thus helping the economy in the long run. Now, if only Nepal could make use of this 'advantage', but our exports are limited to begin with.

Epacific

BAN NOT A BAN

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) has been a major disaster ('When is a ban not a ban?', Kunda Dixit, #670). Poor air safety records, pathetic airport facilities, and now the ban on wide-body aircrafts flying into the only international airport in Nepal. What a shame. How can we even compete with other tourist destinations when we cannot even fix our runway on time? Maybe TIA should be privatised, we should explore the possibilities.

Sunil Shakya

- I hung my head in shame after hearing the news that runway in our only international airport is developing potholes. Now the runaway resembles the streets of Kathmandu and it's just a matter of time before a mishap occurs. The less said about the departure lounge and the baggage collection centre, the better. Why do we always wait for something to reach such a terrible stage before taking action? And the timing of the announcement -- as tourist season is about to commence -- is just icing on the cake. I feel sorry for tourism entrepreneurs who have

planned everything in advance, only divine intervention can save them now.

Anonymous

- Safety of passengers, crews, and aircrafts should be the priority before issues like airlines' profit/loss, passengers' comfort and convenience. CAAN and concerned authorities need to look deeper into the underlying causes for the deterioration of the runway and ensure that culprits, if any, do not get away. How was the runway constructed, did the contractors follow standards prescribed by civil engineering professionals and international civil aviation organisations, or were officials involved in corruption while granting contracts for construction? We need answers.

Nyaya Bahadur

- Many features and criteria for runway design have changed drastically over the years. Nepal needs the latest quality control systems to review design, construction, and maintenance. But corruption and malpractices within the country's aviation industry are open secrets.

Radha Krishna Deo

- Because of bad politics and a culture of corruption, Nepal's airports and roads are crumbling and our beautiful country is falling behind in tourism.

Yam Gurung

- Nepal shares cultural, religious, and historical links with India and yet India is working on a multi-billion

financial aid to Bhutan in its five year budget. I wonder how much help we get from our southern and northern neighbours. Enough to fix the potholes at the airport I hope.

Hemant T

MODI'S OBAMA WISH

It's good that *NT* wants its readers to be more familiar with the political scene in neighbouring countries like India ('Modi's Obama wish', Ajaz Ashraf, #670). But publishing a subjective one-sided diatribe against a party or individual, like Ajaz does with Narendra Modi, is not the way to do that. To have a healthy debate, we need to hear from both sides.

Dev Batsya

LITTLE BIG EV

Electric vehicles (EV) are not as green as they are hyped to be ('Little big EV', Kunda Dixit, #670). They may not belch out smoke or carbon monoxide, but leaded batteries are no less hazardous. While 99 per cent of battery lead are said to be recoverable, most such scrap goes across the border as we have no units processing lead scraps.

Armugam

- Any government with common sense would shift national strategy to trains, trams, trolley buses, and ropeways for electric mass transit. But we in Nepal continue to buy and sell fossil-fuel guzzling cars pretending the petroleum bill doesn't exist. Bicycles would be best, but if you

must drive a car, then drive electric.

Jabu

DAMN SPOT

Ass, I have been following your column for more than a decade and still don't understand how you manage to keep your sense of humour and how you have not lost hope yet ('Out, out damn spot', Backside, #670). I am full of rage because of what is going on in Nepal and about to give up and abandon the country as a lost cause. So please give me some pointers to see the humour in all this and have a positive outlook.

Shanti Cane

- Ass, you are simply awesome and the way you find humour in hard news is superb. Your style of writing, word selections are on par with other renowned international newspaper columns.

Ajay



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #671

Q. What should be done to guarantee elections in November?



Weekly Internet Poll # 672. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What will you base your votes on in the upcoming CA elections?



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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Afraid of catching big fish

Top politicians don't seem to be the target of Lokman Singh Karki's selective pursuit of the corrupt

The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has sprung into action in recent weeks with the zeal of a born-again convert. It has grabbed the public attention not only by lodging a number of corruption cases in the special court, but also arresting top officials of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) for graft.



INSIDE OUT

Muma Ram Khanal

CIAA's controversial chief, Lokman Singh Karki, has lately become the talk of the town, and his very name instills fear on bureaucrats. A large section of civil society and Kathmandu intelligentsia had seriously objected to his appointment, citing his royal, anti-democratic, and opportunistic antecedents. After all, how could a one-time Chief Secretary who had himself abused his authority to crush the April 2006 pro-democracy movement, become the head of the body entrusted with checking the abuse of authority?

Stunningly, the head honchos of the major political parties who run the country's political syndicate, appointed him with surprising unanimity earlier this year. The CIAA chief's post had become an object of political bargaining among the parties and had remained vacant for four years.

The leaders would have preferred to appoint the type of person who would never investigate any abuse of authority. But after the formation of the non-political government under Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi, the vacant constitutional positions were also completed with unprecedented efficiency.

Transparency International

ranked Nepal 139 among 176 countries this year. TI reported that Nepal's political leaders are the most corrupt on the rotten pile of putrid public servants. So, it was politicians who kept the CIAA headless for so long because they didn't want themselves probed.

Karki has won public accolade in Nepali social networking sites for his crackdown on the NEA. But even he hasn't yet mustered the courage to go after the politicians who installed him at the CIAA.

As reported in this paper last week, Maoist ex-combatants have alleged that over Rs 4 billion of allowances for phantom fighters were embezzled by their own party bosses. Krishna Bahadur Mahara was taped in flagrante asking a Chinese businessman to fork out Rs 500 million to buy members of the CA and the tape is in the public domain. There are reports of malfeasance piling up against Hisila Yami and other Maoist leaders. There is no word on the Rs 30 million scam over the purchase of APCs for Nepali peacekeepers in Sudan. Two ministers in the current council have blatantly itchy palms.

But these do not seem to be the target of Karki's selective corruption hunt and if he doesn't catch some big political fish soon he is going to be accused of playing to the gallery. If he catches the wrong ones, he will be accused of a witch-hunt. If he conducts a wishy-washy investigation that absolves senior comrades, it will be seen as a whitewash. Not easy being Karki these days. A glaring example of his overreach was the action taken against caterer BL Sharma for organising his 90th birthday party this week.

After democracy in 1990, corruption was also democratised. After 2006 corruption has been

institutionalised and under the Maoist-Madhesi coalition led by Baburam Bhattarai, plunder became endemic and all-pervasive. It is now the modus operandi of the state and in this impunity-ridden dictatorship of the four parties, any purloining

of state funds can be justified in the name of political accommodation or protecting the peace process.

The joke even within my erstwhile Maoist party is that we did not fight for 'mukti' (liberation) but for 'Mukti

Tower' (the high rise allegedly belonging to senior comrades).

Muma Ram Khanal was a central leader of the CPN (Maoist) during the insurgency. His column, Inside Out, appears every fortnight in Nepali Times.

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My missing father

RAM KUMAR BHANDARI

My father, Tej Bahadur Bhandari, was on his way to the CDO office in Besisahar on 31 December 2001 when a group of armed security personnel arrested, blind-folded, and tortured him on the street in broad daylight. He was never seen again.

Those responsible for my father's disappearance remain in the service: Pitamber Adhikari is now an SSP, Major Santosh Singh Thakuri is in the army. They denied detaining my father, and 13 years later the state still doesn't formally accept that it took him in.

Lamjung district was in the throes of conflict then, and the royal government had adopted TADO (Terrorism and Destructive Activities Ordinance) to crack down on the insurgents. After the Royal Nepal Army entered the war in November 2001, many innocent citizens were killed, tortured, and forcibly disappeared. School teachers, student activists, community leaders, educators, ordinary peasants, and unemployed youth were targeted by both the state and the Maoists.

My father was 56 then, and a retired teacher and social worker. He had been threatened by the security forces and CDO Shiva Prasad Nepal had called him in for questioning, and released him due to lack of evidence.

During conflict, it was not easy for citizens to access the Supreme Court but, even so, many families filed writs of habeas corpus which were mostly dismissed without proper investigation. After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), the Supreme Court passed a decision on disappearance cases on 1 June 2007, but none of the components of that decision have been implemented.

The Court ordered that the government enact a law to criminalise enforced disappearance in line with the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, establish a high level commission of inquiry on disappearances in compliance with the international criteria on such commissions of inquiry, require investigations and prosecutions of persons responsible for disappearances, and provide for adequate compensation and relief to the victims and their families.



A son's moving account of how he turned the pain of having a disappeared father into activism

We, the surviving families of the disappeared, continue to live every day through the grief of not knowing the truth about our loved ones. And we still face security threats. The perpetrators of the abductions, torture, disappearances, and killings during the war are in positions of power and many have been promoted. There is a conspiracy of silence between the former warring sides not to rake up war time atrocities.

I speak out against human rights abuses, I name the perpetrators publicly, but the police, the army, bureaucrats, political leaders listen and take no action. There are veiled threats, but I have no fear. I am committed to challenging the crime in a court of law to demand truth and justice however long that takes. And I speak for thousands of other families whose fathers, brothers or sons were also disappeared.

We dream of justice and dignity, but first we want the truth. Our family life has been destroyed, many of us lost bread-winners, and our extended grief has no closure. What does 'family' mean, after all? Can the state and the politicians ever compensate for the loss of our family life?

The former enemies are now represented in the state. Can they clarify why the proposed Disappearance Commission itself disappeared? The alleged perpetrators of war crimes like Raju Basnet, Ajit Thapa, Kuber Singh Rana, Ramesh Swar, Pitamber Adhikari, Shiva Prasad Nepal, Dhruva Shah, Niranjan Basnet, Balkrishna Dhungel, and many others remain in powerful positions.

We have seen in the cases of Dekendra Thapa and Krishna Adhikari that the government and political leadership is incapable of remorse, of feeling our pain, or addressing our need for truth and justice. The state continues to deny forced disappearances even happened. We have been left dangling, where do we now go for answers?

Doesn't our country have to respect the rights of its citizens? Doesn't it have to respect the rule of law and international covenants that it is signatory to? My father and other disappeared citizens were supporting social transformation, speaking out against structural violence, and struggling to protect the local democratic space. Why was that a crime?

The state should start by publicly apologising for the brutal past of which it was a participant. Then we want it to tell us the truth, for once. After that we want justice for the crimes committed. My father would have been 68, I owe it to his memory to continue this struggle. 📧

Ram Kumar Bhandari is coordinator of the National Network of Families of the Disappeared and Missing and the chair of the Committee for Social Justice.

nepalitimes.com

Other columns by Ram Kumar Bhandari:
Voice of the victims, #640, Nothing but the truth, #648



Whereabouts

BHRIKUTI RAI

Last week 70 former Maoist combatants joined the Nepal Army as officers, following 1,352 ex-combatants who became soldiers in the national army in July. The events officially conclude

the demobilisation of Maoist combatants and the integration of some of them into the Nepal Army.

However, there is unfinished business. We are headed to another election for a Constituent Assembly to try to write a constitution again. And the former enemies

who are now ruling the country are reluctant to set up commissions to deal with the disappeared and for truth and reconciliation, as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA).

When it was signed in November 2006 the CPA required the political parties

Lingering loss

Shyam Bhatta was busy attending to customers at his grocery store in Old Naikap in October 2001 when a group of young men who identified themselves as revolutionary students took him out for interrogation. His wife Shova tried to hold him back, but he said there was no harm talking to people.

Shova (*below*) never saw her husband again. "If only he wasn't home that day, maybe my children would have grown up with a father," says Shova. Twelve years on, her son and daughter are now college students.

"I don't really remember him," says Subhash Bhatta, who was only five when his father was taken away. Shova is now a member of the National Network of Families of the Disappeared and Missing and says meeting other families like hers has given her the strength to fight for justice.

"I have not lost hope yet and refuse to believe my husband is dead until we find his remains and perform his last rites," explains Shova.

Losing the sole bread-winner of the family has been hard on the Bhatta family and Shova blames not just the Maoists, but the other parties for not being willing to face up to the truth of conflict.

Says Shova: "They should just accept what they did to us, tell us what happened, where my husband is, and maybe after that we can move on."



BIKRAM RAI



BHRIKUTI RAI

The Dhanusha Five

Sanjeev Kumar Karna from Janakpur was 24 when he went on a picnic with his friends on 8 October 2003. The next day, his father Jai Kishore Labh got a call saying his son had been detained by the police. Sanjeev was never seen again. "Why are they still hiding the truth from us?" asks Bimala Devi Karna, Sanjeev's 58-year-old mother. Together with Sanjeev, his four friends Durgesh Labh (23), Shailendra Yadav (17), Jitendra Jha (20), and Pramod Mandal (19) were also disappeared. Their parents Bauwey Ram Yadav, Jibchhi Mandal, Indira Jha, Bimala Devi Karna, Gayatri Devi Karna) posed for a group picture in Janakpur last week (left).

The current Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kuber Singh Rana, was posted as SP in Dhanusha where the disappearances took place.

Jibchhi Mandal, father of Pramod, made it a point to question UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal during a recent Janakpur trip about why his government promoted IGP Rana.

"It has been 10 years and still all they give us are readymade answers," says Mandal, holding Pramod's photograph. "My son was so young, what did they get by taking him away?"



International Day of the Disappeared, 30 August

Friday, 30 August
8 AM Morning rally at Ratna Park with art exhibition
6 PM Lighting candles at Basantapur

Saturday, 31 August
8 AM Solidarity demo protest in front of Bir Hospital to support the struggle of the parents of Krishna Adhikari

compensation and relief to the victims and their families. It was never implemented.

On Friday, families will come together as they do every year on the International Day of the Disappeared to remind the state that the war is far from over for them. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Voice of the victims, #640
Without a trace, #450

unknown

and the Maoists to inform relatives within 60 days about the disappeared or killed during the conflict. Seven years have passed and families of the disappeared still haven't been told the truth.

On 1 June 2007, the Supreme Court ordered the government to enact a law to criminalise enforced disappearances, establish a high level commission of inquiry on disappearance, and provide

EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS



Education first

Everest Bank Limited (EBL) on Tuesday began its CSR Adopt-a-School initiative by making a donation to Rampukar Sah Higher Secondary School in Janakpur. EBL CEO AK Ahluwalia handed computers and lab equipment. EBL will support public and community schools in rural Nepal by helping them improve infrastructure as well as the quality of education. Everest Bank also won "Best Managed Commercial Bank Award 2013" at the Asian Paints Newbiz Award last week.

Maiden flight

102-year-old Bote Rai of Dhankuta who had expressed his desire to fly to newspaper was flown to Kathmandu on a Yeti Airlines flight. Upon arrival at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Rai said, "My wish has come true." After an overnight stay and a tour of Pashupatinath, Rai was flown back to Biratnagar by the same airlines.



Economy lesson



Financial Education, a joint campaign by the Bank of Kathmandu and Save the Children has seen participation of over 15,000 youth. The campaign was

started in 2011 with the aim of promoting saving habits and enhancing banking awareness among young Nepali teenagers and children from low-income backgrounds.

Just did it

Nike has opened its new showroom in Mercantile Building at Darbar Marg. According to Avenues Marketing, authorised dealer of Nike, the showroom was started with the objective of making the company's product more accessible to its valued customer.



Winning partners

Qatar Airways Agents Award Night 2012-2013 was held in Kathmandu on Thursday evening. Qatar Airways travel trade partners, CAAN & MOTCA members, among others were present to celebrate this big night followed by a lavish dinner and dance. Osho World Travel Nepal, Yeti Travels, and Megabyte Travels & Tours won top awards.



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SUNIR PANDEY

After a child drowned near the construction site of the 50MW Upper Marsyangdi project in July, angry locals vandalised equipment and shut down the plant in protest.

They claimed the company had failed to build a bridge which it had promised as part of the project. The lack of local administration meant that political parties had to step in and act as mediators between villagers and developers. Although work resumed after a few days, animosity between the two remains.

The incident highlights exactly what is wrong with Nepal's hydropower sector: investors are not guaranteed any protection by the state and the state in turn has failed to devise proper guidelines for developers on their social obligations.

And behind the hype of Nepal's potential to export power to India, is the stark reality that 40 per cent of Nepalis still have no access to electricity. Nepal's per capita power consumption is among the lowest in Asia at 93 kWh,



BHRIKUTI RAI

Common minimum targets

A lack of understanding among power players has stalled the growth of the hydropower industry

well below the regional average of 810, meaning there is plenty of scope for increasing demand by creating industries.

The broader solution to Nepal's power problems, according to investors, politicians, government officials, and experts who gathered in Kathmandu this week for the Power Summit '13, lies in the creation of a comprehensive Power Development Agreement. Inaugurating the summit,

President Ram Baran Yadav urged participants to "keep ordinary citizens at the centre of all discussions on hydropower development". Even though leaders of political parties were present during each day's concluding sessions, they tended to linger on the fallout of power politics and expended few words on the role of hydropower to reduce poverty.

From the time the private companies were allowed into electricity production, the sector has seen its fair share of politics. When asked if hydropower had a place on their election manifestos, the politicians present answered in the affirmative. But experience shows that parties, especially during election season, have a habit of playing up hydropower to boost their vote banks and have so far refrained from tackling core issues due to fear of being labelled 'anti-development'.

Like every other debate on Nepal's hydropower, the summit too was abuzz with

discussions on the highly ambitious yet controversial joint ventures on the Kosi, Gandaki, Karnali (Chisapani), and Mahakali (Pancheswor) rivers. But former Minister of Water Resources Dipak Gyawali pointed out that the uncertainty over these would exist until both countries worked out an understanding on the value of stored water.

"The Mahakali treaty is going nowhere not because Nepal is lagging behind on its obligations, but because Uttarakhand does not want to drown its villages to provide irrigation water to Uttar Pradesh," explained Gyawali.

To hasten the pace of power production, Bishwaprakash Pandit, secretary at the Ministry of Energy, said the government was looking to build transmission lines to India, solve land acquisition problems, and work out Power Purchase Agreements with private developers as immediate measures to solve the country's power crisis.

The panel concluded by agreeing on the immediate need to:

- Pass the Electricity Act
- Develop a Power Trade Agreement with India so that Nepal can export surplus energy after its domestic demands are met
- Increase domestic demand to cope with any imminent surplus
- Remove inconsistencies out of land acquisition rules and maintain political commitment to build confidence among investors
- Reform the Nepal Electricity Authority by giving separate entities the responsibility to create, operate, and distribute power
- Build transmission lines to India to import or export power
- Abandon first-come first-serve methods of granting licences
- Create a basin-based hydropower masterplan to go along with Nepal's imminent state restructuring

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HONDA



EVENTS



TAKE A HIKE, celebrate the festival of women by hiking to Jamacho for a 'Darr Khane' picnic. *August 31st, <http://sevensummitswomen.org/>*

A People War, an exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through 10 years of insurgency. *Everyday except Tuesdays, 11 am to 4 pm, (01)5549948, www.madanpuraskar.org*

Gunla, the Newari month of festivities has begun, be alert with your cameras to take great photographs. *7 August to 6 September*



KATHMANDU BOOK SWAP, Love Books? Love Coffee? Join other bookworms to exchange books and drink your favourite brew. *Second Saturday of every month, 2.30pm, Yellow House, Sanepa, ktmbookswap.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/august-bookswap/*



STREET STYLE, the Prasad Project of street art is launching in Kathmandu. *30 August, 6 to 8pm, prasadadtings.wordpress.com*

Swim and lunch, enjoy your weekends with a dip in the pool and savour a mouthwatering lunch with a glass of beer. *Rs 999, Saturdays, 11am to 6pm, Waterfront Resort, Pokhara, (61)466 303/304, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*

FEM Fashion, the supermodels of Nepal will sashay down the ramp just for you. *Rs 1,500, 30 August, Aroma Restaurant and Bar, Jhamsikhel*

Mahabharat, watch the epic performed by the students of Kathmandu University High School. *Rs 100 & Rs 300, 4 to 5 September, The Village Theatre, Uttar Dhoka, Lajimpat, (01)4230729*

Bottoms up, take your taste buds and olfactory nerves on a joy ride at the 10th Annual wine tasting festival. *Rs 900 per half litre, July to August, Kilroy's, Thamel, (01)4250440/41*

Kachahari Camp and Dash, watch a documentary on Nepali activists who are seeking to transform society through theatre. *6 September, 5.15pm, Russian Culture Centre; 7 September, 1.30pm, Mandala Theatre*



THE SPOKEN WORD, slam poetry collective Word Warriors are back, this time they want you to share your poems. *7 September, 3 to 5pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, theyellowhouse.com.np/contact.html*



THE ARTIST IS PRESENT, watch this documentary that follows Serbian artist Marina Abramovich as she prepares for a retrospective of her work. *30 August, 5.30pm, Sattya Media Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486, 9813485716, www.youtube.com/watch?v=boYV8KzqSfk*

DINING



HERITAGE KITCHEN AND BAR, quick, friendly service, good Thai food, and the charm of a refurbished old Newari building. *Thamel*

Bubbly Brunch, let the subtleties of Arabian cuisine tease your palate, pasta if you're not too adventurous with food. *Rs 1,100, 11am to 3pm, Saturdays, Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999 (Ext. 7520/7515)*



KASI, spread out over a large terrace overlooking Phora Darbar, Kasi offers a delectable plate of Newari delicacies. *Darbar Marg*

Cafe Cheeno, comfortable and elegant, this is the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and chat with friends on a rainy day. *Patan*

Krishnarpan, a specialty Nepali restaurant at The Dwarika's Hotel

serving 6 to 22 courses of authentic Nepali meal. *The Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali, (01)4479488*

Mongolian BBQ, gobble generous quantities of roasted meat and wash it down with a glass of mocktail, with traditional music playing within earshot. *Rs 1,099, 7pm onwards, Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, (061)462222 Ext. 5055*



FALCHA, give yourself away to the twin pleasures of lemon jeera chicken and mutton handi kabab. *Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur*

Honacha, all of Kathmandu's ancient charms under one roof, or on the windy terrace above it. *Krishna Mandir, Patan*



PAGODA CHINESE RESTAURANT, head to this jade palace if you're in the mood for Chinese. *Budhanilkantha, (01)4375 280, pvh@wlink.com.np*

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MUSIC



ALL THAT JAZZ, Sachal Vasandani is here to charm you with his subtle singing. *Rs 2,000, 30 August, 6.30pm, Summit Hotel, Kupandol, 9818233101, 9851075172*

Cancion del Mariachi, listen to latin and gypsy jazz with Monsif Mzibri and Hari Maharjan and drink jugs of sangria. *Every Saturday, 7pm onwards, New Orleans Cafe, Jhamsikhel*

Starry Night BBQ, catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick. *Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards, Fridays, Shambala Garden Café. Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999 (Ext. 7520/7515)*

Tuborg stage shows, your favourite Nepali rockstars at a town near you. *31 August, Narayanghat*

Newaz in Black, the band is back with a brand new album, live performance guaranteed. *6 September, 7pm onwards, Attic Bar, Lajimpat*

GETAWAYS

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Mango Tree Lodge, culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. *Bhetani, Bardia, info@mangotree lodge.com*

Hotel Landmark, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye. *Pokhara, (061)462908/3096/4897, www.landmarkpokhara.com*



Monsoon Madness, dive into the heart of monsoon at Pokhara this weekend. *Rs 4,999, 2 nights / 3 days Package on twin sharing, shangrilavillage@gmail.com, www.hotelshangrila.com, (01)4410051, (061)462222*



DERBY DAY

● Tottenham Hotspur have been making a lot of noises in the transfer window, but hosts Arsenal will look to put them in place. Will north London be red or white this time? *1 September, 8.45pm, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat*

● European greats Real Madrid welcome diligent Athletic de Bilbao. Can the Basque club upset the Castellans? Further east, two coastal cities go head to head as Barcelona visit Valencia. *1 September, 10.45pm, 2 September, 00.45am*

● Roman club Lazio visit the north to tackle Juventus, while their rivals Roma will look to make short shift of Verona. *1 September, 00.45am, 9.45pm*

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If you sing

Squat down, the doyens of Nepali music are back this year at the Paleti Festival. National Poet Madhab Prasad Ghimire, who says he has enjoyed the live versions more than the radio broadcasts of Nepali classics, will open the proceedings. Deji Baraili and Dawa Gyalmo will evoke the Darjeeling of the past, harmonising for yet another rendition of the evergreen 'Mayalu le'. And back from his sell tour of Australian cities, Prem Dhoj Pradhan will close the festival in grand style.

Tickets: Rs 1,000 per show
Dates: 30 August, Madhab Prasad Ghimire, 31 August, Deji Baraili and Dawa Gyalmo
1 September, Prem Dhoj Pradhan
Venue: DAV School, Jawalakhel
(01)4412469, paleti@nepalaya.com.np

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*7 September - 'Dar khane' feasts
8 September - Teej
9 September - Ganesh Chaturthi
10 September - Rishi Panchami*

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Sedans in the city

This is how you should spend your Dasain bonus

TRISHNA RANA

Now is probably not a good time to drive around in Kathmandu if you want to avoid having high BP before your 30th birthday. The Valley's not-yet-widened streets resemble sets of a World War II movie, the potholes have quadrupled, and the levels of dust and smog are potential killers. But until some genius mass produces Jetsons family like hover-cars, the slightly expensive yet extremely efficient and smooth riding - Toyota Etios and Honda Amaze - could be the BP busters we've been looking for. Last week we took out the two sedans now available in Kathmandu on a test spin around town and for the first time in my short driving career, the desire to strangle fellow road users and officials from the department of road was surprisingly amiss.

Assembled in Karnataka and made to lure the budget end of the Indian market, Toyota first introduced Etios in 2010, but it did not fare too well. In a cost-cutting effort to produce 'affordable' sedans, the Japanese company compromised on style and came out with shoddy, un-Toyota like interiors which discerning consumers rejected. The exterior of the 2013 version is nearly identical to its older cousin except for minor redesigning of the grille and a chrome finish. But the cabin has undergone an impressive makeover. The two-tone ash brown interior replaces the dull gray of older models, bringing back the class and luxury that Toyota is known for and making the sedan feel more spacious.

Comfort is where Etios scores big this time round. There is ample legroom both in the front and back seats, the 595 litres of boot is the largest in its segment, and both

driver and front passenger enjoy adjustable headrests, the driver can even adjust the height. For those us accustomed to driving compact cars, the large, cockpit like combimeter with blue backlight is delighting in the same way a shiny new toy is to a child, almost to the point of distraction. A better designed noise, vibration, and harshness (NVH) package means that lower in-cabin noise is hardly audible, but the engine still produces a loud roar when it's revved.

Beyond ergonomics, Toyota Etios (only available in petrol version in Nepal) deserves massive thumbs up for managing to make driving on the Shankhamul road - possibly one of the most maddening stretches of tarmac in the city - a pleasant experience. Customers had complaints about the older vehicles' suspension, but with the new Etios riding over potholes is not as painful as it once was. The sedan absorbs even the nastiest bumps and its light weight makes handling effortless. At low speeds - or 'normal' speed in Nepal - steering feels extremely light, however, the car tends to fall behind as the speed builds up.

Slash away a million from Toyota's price tag and you can get yourself the Honda Amaze - the brand's cheapest and shortest

sedan. The interiors are less fancy than the Etios, but Amaze packs in a powerful performance even before the needle passes the 2,000 rpm mark and provides one of the best fuel efficiency rates in the entry-level sedan class (25.8kmpl for the diesel, not available in Nepal). The vehicle borrows heavily from the hatchback Brio's minimalistic design, which some customers might frown upon. It also leaves out some important features like climate control, seat-belt height adjustment, adjustable neck restraints, auto-locking doors. But the beige, black, and brown dashboard and spacious interiors along with 400 l of boot space offer ample comfort and we had zero complaints during our hour long ride to Chobar. What it lacks in beauty, the Amaze more than makes up in its performance. The light weight car

HONDA AMAZE

MILEAGE (CITY): 15 KPL
MILEAGE (HIGHWAY): 18 KPL
ENGINE SIZE: 1.2 L
POWER: 88 PS @ 6,000 RPM
TORQUE: 109 NM
PRICE WITH TAXES: RS 2.8 MILLION

with smooth gearshift is easy to manoeuvre and is a dependable city companion.

Those among us who drive the mini i-20s, Picantos, and Swifts, there couldn't be a better time to upgrade to a Toyota or Honda sedan with Dasain bonus just round the corner. But if you are already a proud sedan owner, then the Etios and Amaze don't boast any breakthrough technology or to-die-for features to make you want to jump on the wagon(s) just yet.



TOYOTA ETIOS

MILEAGE (CITY): 11 KPL
MILEAGE (HIGHWAY): 14 KPL
ENGINE SIZE: 1.5 L
POWER: 90 PS @ 5,600 RPM
TORQUE: 132 NM
PRICE WITH TAXES: RS 3.4 MILLION





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COLOURFUL CAPITAL

Kathmandu's mural filled walls deserve a second glance

SANGAM SHILPAKAR

There was a time when a sea of red letters announcing bandas and political meetings littered the white washed walls of Kathmandu. But thanks to the painstaking efforts of Nepali and international artists, the otherwise dull streets of the Valley are getting a festive facelift and residents have reason to catch their breath and linger over the beautiful images.

In 2008 French urban artist nicknamed Invader began painting walls in Kathmandu. While his work didn't generate much buzz, it provided inspiration for others to paint the town red. In the past year, 12 international muralists including popular German street artist duo, Herakut, and 25 local artists, from Kolor Kathmandu have painted 25 murals in Baluwatar,



Shankhamul, Bhotahiti, Jawalakhel, and other parts of town. Their aim: to create 75 murals to represent each district in the country. The campaign is supported by Netherlands' Prince Clause Fund and Pashupati Paints is providing the group with 800 litres of paint. "Kathmandu's residents have been treated to visual pollution all their lives. I wanted to change this by making our streets more appealing

through mural art," says Yuki Poudel, the 27-year-old project director who was inspired by street art in Philadelphia.

Similarly painters and graffiti artists from Artudio, a centre for visual arts, and Art Lab have been by livening up the city walls with their brushes while raising awareness on issues ranging from gender violence, to reproductive health to child abuse at the same




PICS: SANGAM SHILPAKAR

time. "By turning public spaces into public galleries, we want to instill positivity in people," explains Roman Bhattarai, program director of Artlab, a group based in the Valley which is involved in street-art, social-projects, designing event sets, and creating t-shirts.

However, as election date draws closer, murals around Kathmandu are in danger of once

LET'S PAINT: A Kolor Kathmandu mural representing Doti district seen in Kupondole (above). Canadian artist Danae Brissonnet of the same group works on her piece (right).

again being outdone by political sloganeering. With paintbrushes in hand, artists are gearing up for a tough battle ahead. 

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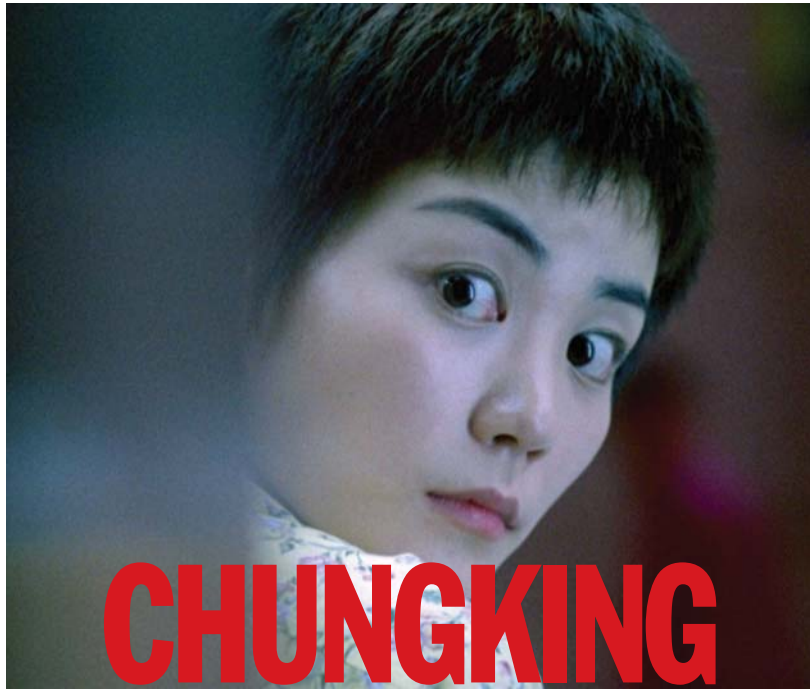
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CHUNGKING EXPRESS

Wong Kar-wai is undeniably one of the most brilliant, revered, and beloved filmmakers living today. Ever since his first, dreamy film *As Tears Go By* in 1988, he has had a loyal



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande



following of cineastes who have waited anxiously for every single installment just to be transported yet again into that dreamy, luscious world that only a Wong Kar-wai film can simulate. While most of his films are

about love affairs that never quite blossom and bear fruit, *Chungking Express* (1994) is not one of them. Perhaps one of his most charming films, *Chungking Express* is so beloved by Quentin Tarantino that he introduces the film in most available editions with his usual over the top enthusiastically goofy style, claiming that he is madly in love with Faye Wong, a famous singer in Hong Kong and one of the female leads in the film (it is possible that she is the most adorable heroines you will ever see in a romantic comedy, barring even Meg Ryan in her heyday). For those of you who have not seen *Chungking*, you are in for such a treat. The film, in vintage

Wong Kar-wai style, is about two sets of star-crossed lovers. While the first set of lovers, played by Bridget Lin and Takeshi Kaneshiro, go the usual Kar-wai way of moody separation, Faye Wong's character, called simply 'Faye' and her paramour, a cop referred to as 'Cop 633' but played by the incredibly charismatic Tony Leung, have a courtship that is uniquely quirky and ridiculously charming. Cop 633 is recovering from severe heartbreak, his flighty flight attendant girlfriend having left him for another man. He often stops on his beat to eat at a snack bar where Faye has recently started working. As fate would have it, the flight attendant has left a letter and the cop's keys at the snack bar. The cop refuses to read the letter day after day and as Faye starts to fall in love with him she takes to breaking into his apartment, secretly moving things around and ameliorating his surroundings. I won't tell you how this thoroughly kooky story ends, but let's just say, it ends well. So, as much as I love this film, why am I writing about it now? Well, for everyone who isn't already at the edge of their seats waiting, Wong Kar-wai is about to release his newest film *The Grandmaster* - already a hit in China. An epic movie about a famous martial arts master, directed by a giant of cinema - come on all you decision makers at Nepali theatres, how can you resist this one? 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

SECOND INNINGS: Chairman of the Interim Council of Ministers Khil Raj Regmi presents officer insignia to former Maoist combatants at the passing out ceremony in Kharipati on Monday.



DEVAKI BISTA

WELCOME: Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala welcomes former finance secretary Rameswor Khanal (*left*) into the NC on Monday amid a special function at party headquarters in Sanepa.



BIKRAM RAI

SUN POWER: Workers install solar panels at Kankali Secondary School in Naikap on Wednesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

JOY RIDE: A family drives past waterlogged roads in Anamnagar on Saturday.



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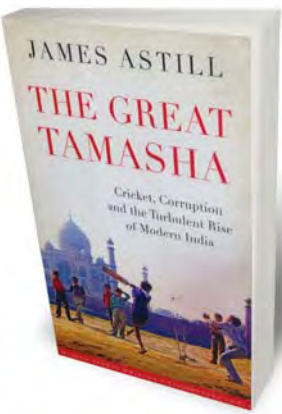
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ReVIEW

Cricket's media tamasha



The Great Tamasha: Cricket, Corruption, and the Turbulent Rise of Modern India
James Astill
Wisden Sports Writing, 2013
INR 399

Correspondents of *The Economist* are famous for being not famous. There are no bylines and this stems from a strongly-held belief that attaching a name to reporters undermines their credibility. *Economist* correspondents therefore almost work undercover.

It is perhaps to compensate for this anonymity that journalists at the *Economist* invariably end up writing books. And James Astill, the magazine's former South Asia bureau chief in Delhi has chosen cricket (the phenomenon, not just the game) as his book. Many have written books about cricket, but Astill dissects cricket in India with the scalpel of an

anthropologist, a historian, a social scientist, and a political economist.

The Great Tamasha: Cricket Corruption and the Turbulent Rise of Modern India, traces the game's mutation by media. When Sachin Tendulkar started playing cricket, there were 30 million households with television in India, by the time he was playing in the 2011 World Cup, it had exploded to 160 million households. More than 80 per cent of Indians below 25 watch cricket regularly.

The ownership of the global mass media has changed due to the convergence of three technologies: telephone, television, and computer. In India, one can add cricket.

Media changed cricket in India and cricket changed the media. Where else in the world is cricket the main news not just in the sports section, but in the main evening bulletin, edging out even politics?

Cricket's original rules were too slow in the age of social networking and the short attention span of satellite-to-home tv viewers. So the media moghuls changed them to invent the Twenty20s. But the incestuous greed of the media-industrial complex got the better of everyone and the spot fixing scandal tarnished not just India's celebrity cricketers, but the game itself. We could have seen it coming, Astill says, in a country with the \$40 billion Coalgate and the \$30 billion 2-G scams, the IPL scandal was just waiting to happen.


The author also does a class and caste-based analysis of cricket in India, tracing its history from as far back as 1875 when cricket started being played at the Gymkhana Club in colonial Bombay. The first Indian players were the Palwankars, who are Dalits. Later on, India's stark class divide was reflected in cricket: the poor played with improvised balls and bats in the parks and streets of the vast country, while the middle-class and the privileged dominated the big games.

The book delves into India's inability since independence to spread the opportunity of playing cricket more equitably and how this is keeping out

fresh, raw talent. This is not surprising, the cricket divide just reflects India's rich-poor gap and the inequities in nutrition, education, and healthcare. Astill concludes: 'Elite and popular, unifying and exclusionary, polite and uproarious, Indian cricket is as contradictory as India itself.'

A lot of the blame for the corruption in cricket has gone to the advertisement-driven media for ignoring it. In his regular column in this paper, Indian journalist Ajaz Ashraf wrote recently that the IPL's Twenty20 format has ruined a game that was more nuanced and exposed the rot within. Ashraf wrote: 'Cricketers don't live outside the social system, making it inevitable that the bug of corruption would bite the players, more so as owners of IPL teams are no paragons of virtue.'

Astill recounts the early history of cricket in India, to the milestone 1983 victory in the World Cup, right down to the show-biz nature of the game's media-driven mania in the subcontinent. Tamasha is a word India gave to English and cricket is the game that the English gave to India.

And the conclusion is: what we see on the sports channels these days is not cricket, it's money. The real passion for cricket, the game, can still be found in the bare-footed bowlers in the dusty maidans and landfill sites of India's slums. 
Kunda Dixit

Regular visitors to Bhaktapur, as well as its residents, will already be very aware of the city's major drawback. Located only 13km away from the capital proper, the town may well boast higher standards of architectural preservation, quaint surrounds and a dearth of traffic - but it is let down enormously by its lack of good quality eateries.

Amid squares and side streets dominated by hole-in-the-walls and chow mein-by-numbers tourist traps, Café Beyond comes as a real surprise.

SOMEPLACE ELSE Serving Korean food with vegetables from their own organic back garden, Beyond provides welcome respite from a town whose menus and prices more closely resemble those found on trekking routes. True to its name, the café is located outside of the main Bhaktapur heritage area, meaning that the Rs 1,100 tourist entrance fee is not a prerequisite.

We took refuge from the afternoon rain in the venue's bright, colourful, and airy interior and received a warm, if slightly slow welcome. Café Beyond appears to operate with only a skeleton staff and so it may not be the ideal choice if you're in a rush to eat. However, the food is more than worth the wait. Unfortunately, the ongoing bird flu debacle saw us denied both chicken and egg dishes - quite an impediment here, as it is elsewhere. One can only



PICS: CC

CAFÉ BEYOND

wonder what we won't be able to eat next week.

Picking from the restaurant's unusual handwritten menus, we ordered most of what we could. An eggless bibimbap (Rs 280) of lightly steamed vegetables, glutinous rice, and fermented chili sauce - all of which were delicious in their simplicity and lightness

of preparation. A generous plate of kimbap (Rs 260, various fillings) also impressed. This dish, similar to sushi, was particularly unusual for the inclusion of a cheese filling - odd, but not unpleasant, and a sign of surprises to come.


We were impressed with the way Café Beyond was willing to play with our expectations, but



perhaps less so with the menu's tendency toward ambiguity. We awaited the 'Mysterious Combination' (Rs 330) with a certain amount of trepidation and were presented with a meze-esque plate of sliced fruits

and vegetables, a side dish of miniature flatbreads, and a small bowl of Bhaktapur's omnipresent King Curd. Again, the freshness of the ingredients shone through, but we were left with more questions than answers - not least as to why this relatively small, simple arrangement was one of the most expensive items on an otherwise very reasonably priced menu?

Dessert continued the theme, with the café's signature 'Beyond Dessert' (Rs 160) - essentially fruit and curd wrapped in a thick, soggy roti - seeing intrigue displaced by mild disappointment. The banana crumble (Rs 120), with its straightforward, no-nonsense name, served only to confuse us further. Poor presentation and execution make this particular item one to avoid.

Café Beyond's delicious, simplistic take on Korean main courses and snacks is hard to grumble about though, particularly in the context of a culinary scene dominated by stodge, spice, and staples. Our party of four also left, satisfied, for less than Rs 1,500 - it's hard to imagine any of Bhaktapur's mainstays matching that. 
CC

How to get there: leave Bhaktapur Darbar Square via the main city gate and head straight for around 100m. Café Beyond is on your right, emblazoned with paintings on its shop front window.



watch&see

ESPRIT

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Tracing back vibrio cholerae

Cholera like typhoid is restricted to humans, spreads through fecal oral transmission, and is endemic in Nepal. The bacteria, vibrio cholerae, produces a potent toxin which may lead to severe dehydrating diarrhoea and death



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

within 12 hours. Clinically, however, a cholera-bug infected person may span a spectrum from being an asymptomatic carrier to a severely debilitated patient. During the 19th century, cholera pandemics killed millions across Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America. The disease was given the nickname 'Blue Death' because extreme dehydration caused the skin to turn grayish-blue. Even today Africa and Asia have the highest numbers of reported cholera cases. In January 2010, the disease resurfaced in Haiti after more than a century following the devastating earthquake. The outbreak claimed more than 8,000 lives in Haiti and

was embarrassingly traced back to the Nepali peacekeeping base. Almost 70 per cent of cholera patients succumb to the disease and the main reason for this is volume depletion brought on by the vibrio toxin which triggers a rapid outpouring of fluid into the intestine from the cells lining the gut. Because our bodies are 60 per cent water, cholera diarrhoea feels like a sponge being wrung out. The watery diarrhoea called 'rice water' ('chaulani') refers to the appearance of water after soaking rice. Because we are voracious rice eaters, most Nepalis have no problem in recognising 'chaulani'. However, drinking water to replace fluid loss is no good because the intestine in a patient with cholera won't absorb plain water. Beginning in the early 1900s, the administration of intravenous fluids helped slash mortality rates to 30 per cent. But it was engineers like Joseph Bazalgette from the UK, who really made a difference in lowering death rates in the western world. Bazalgette built interceptor sewers along the banks of the Thame in the late 1800s that took care of fecally transmitted diseases like cholera.

But how did poorer countries deal with cholera at the time? Unfortunately, millions of people especially children continued to perish globally even when patients made it to hospitals or clinics because intravenous tubings, volumes of sterile fluid, and needles were unavailable or expensive. The work of Bazalgette and others had not yet started to make an impact in the developing world. Almist six decades late in the 1960s two resourceful American researchers, David Nalin and Richard Cash, based in Dhaka (in what was then East Pakistan) during a cholera epidemic revolutionised treatment. At this time other scientists had discovered that sugar helps the gut absorb water. Nalin and Cash decided to test this hypothesis by giving patients an oral rehydration solution containing sugar as well as salt, effectively 'noon chini pani' as we know it in Nepal. Many people doubted this would work because the victims would have to drink many litres of this solution every day. Amazingly, after the patients consumed vast quantities of the fluid, they no longer required intravenous fluids. This solution provided a crucial breakthrough in the treatment of cholera, but the story gets even more interesting. After Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971 caused thousands to be displaced, a cholera epidemic broke out at a refugee camp of 350,000 in West Bengal, India. Due to the severe shortage of intravenous supplies in the camp, medical director Dilip Mahalanabis had no choice but to try the 'noon chini pani' Dhaka solution. The results from the oral rehydration were startling: instead of the usual 70 per cent casualty rate, only 3 per cent died. The take home message: if cholera victims are alert, able to drink 'noon chini pani' in large quantities, they can save their own lives.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Smartshot

The Shiva statue in Sanga, Phewa Lake and the stunning Annapurna range, Tenzin Thinley of *Caravan* fame, and Biru the yawning hippopotamus – what do they have in common? All of them have become profile pictures on Facebook. And yet digital camera manufacturers took more than a decade to understand this basic human instinct to overshare their lives online and to incorporate social media into their gadgets. Samsung's WB200F, at Rs 25,000, makes this transition from atmosphere to cyber-sphere as smooth as silk.

Sharing photos online means you need to make yours stand out, for millions of images are flowing through the mains. Use My Magic Frame to frame one photo with another, or Split Shot to create artsy diptychs and triptychs, and Photo Filter to Instagram your photos and videos. The best, however, is the panorama feature: press the shutter and move your camera laterally or vertically to create a stunning vista that would have taken a lot of hassle on a computer. Once you're done adding frills, you can either upload photos directly to your



Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram accounts or press the Auto Share icon to transfer photos to a phone. All you have to do is download the Samsung smart camera app on your phone and you are good to go.

The WB200F is fully equipped with

all functions imaginable on a pocket-camera, but it's 'smart' features warrant attention. For example, you can simply tap the screen to take photos, although this has as much time-lag as pressing the shutter. There's also the remote button option on the camera which turns your phone into a remote control. Zoom and click to your heart's liking from your phone.

The huge LCD screen on the back and sparse controls on the left over space indicate Samsung's desire to wean users from tap control to touch. Still, it's early days and there some buttons you just can't do without like the flash. Pressing it will make the flash spring out like a jack in the box and perhaps this is one flimsy weakness Samsung just couldn't avoid.

Just the other day, Yantrick's cousin flew in from the US, bringing her manicured babies to these badlands. And what did one of the toddlers do? Used his fingers to pinch and zoom a glossy magazine picture. The world is migrating online, folks, pack up before you get left behind.

Yantrick's verdict: if pocket cameras are your thing, you would do well to follow the leading maker.

NEW

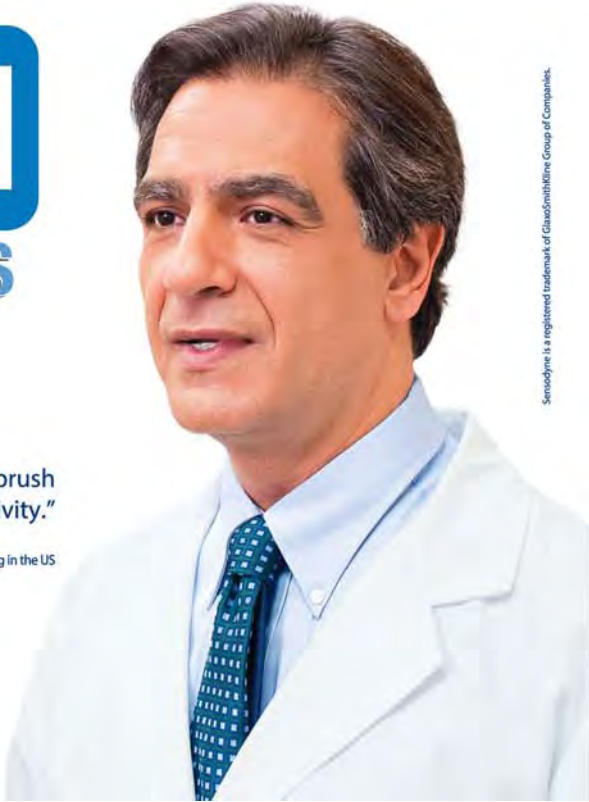


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Do journalists need an education?

India's Information and Broadcasting Minister Manish Tewari had the media aflutter with a proposal that those wishing to be journalists should first pass an exam before they are granted a licence to be reporters.

Tewari presumably believes the quality of Indian journalism has plummeted and that this deterioration can be stemmed through a licence system. Obviously, he thinks journalism has the same mould as the medical and legal professions, their practice crucially dependent on mastering a specific body of knowledge.

I have yet to come across a journalist who has an office to which people troop to have their ideas of governance or society refined and paying a fee in return. Journalists are, to use the cliché, the watchdogs



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

of democracy. They are the muckrakers, they hold a mirror to society, they educate as well as entertain. Their oeuvre necessarily combines the kitsch and the sublime. They are the medium through which the nation converses with itself.

Might not better-educated, better-trained journalists help the nation to converse with itself in more meaningful, efficacious ways? Theoretically, yes. But, do educated politicians make better leaders and parliamentarians? Yes, you are likely to say.

Shocking as it may sound, better-educated MPs in India don't necessarily improve its productivity. Here are some facts about the Indian Lok Sabha, culled from the impressive database of PRS Legislative Research, an independent, non-partisan organisation.

In the First Lok Sabha, 23 per cent of members were not even high school graduates, as against just three per cent of members in the current one. Yet, at its dissolution, the First Lok Sabha completed 677 sittings and passed 333 bills. By contrast, the current Lok Sabha, till 20 August, has had 322 sittings and adopted 152 bills.

Again, the 13th Lok Sabha is generally considered the most educated: only three per cent of its members were non-matriculate, 17 per cent were matriculate or high-school pass, a whopping 48 per cent were graduates – the highest ever in India's parliamentary history – an impressive 27 per cent were postgraduates, and five per cent doctorates. However, it managed 356 sittings and passed 297 bills, not anywhere near the First Lok Sabha's tally on these key performance indicators.

It was the Third Lok Sabha which was perhaps the least

No educational institute necessarily makes journalist sensitive to a guilty conscience



EDUCATION AND ETHICS:
Conservation expert Surendra Varma talks to post graduate students of Mass Communication at St Joseph's College in Bangalore about responsible journalism.

educated. Yet, it had 578 sittings and passed 272 bills, just 25 less than what the most educated MPs achieved. The skewed ratio between sittings and bills during the term of the best-educated Lok Sabha suggests that it hastily cleared its legislative business, a norm which has become increasingly reinforced over the last decade.

Might not education-quality correlation turn out skewed in journalism as well? What is good or bad journalism depends on your definition of quality. As far as the media's role of being the watchdog of

democracy goes, it is conceivable that erudite journalists could fail to point to or oppose executive overreach, the loot of the exchequer, or its dereliction of duty, just as better-educated parliamentarians have failed to acquit their responsibilities.

Indeed, the perceived crisis plaguing the Indian parliament and journalism isn't a function of education as much as it is about conflicting ideas of ethics and norms. Even the most scholarly parliament would come a cropper until its members are inclined to debate and pass bills, or agree to the norms

for its smooth functioning. Likewise, irrespective of the minimum qualification prescribed for journalists, the media's watchdog-role as well its quality cannot improve unless its practitioners adhere to ethical standards and evolve a consensus over the norms binding them.

It wouldn't require months of education to inculcate ethics in those wishing to be journalists. The problem lies elsewhere. In the media, as in politics, ethics and diligence are compromised because of the greed of the journalist. Again, more often

than not, it is the party bosses who abet or condone those who transgress the standards of ethics in politics. Similarly, in the media, it is the proprietors who, to either earn inordinately high profits or for other ulterior motives, redefine ideas of journalism that unconscionably compromise its quality.

Even licenced journalists will still have a master to sing to. Their refusal to join the chorus will not depend on their education. No educational institute necessarily makes you sensitive to a guilty conscience. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

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日本語話せませす、

The best

Recently, I was invited to speak at an interaction in my capacity as the Chief Election Commissioner for the 2008 polls. I had said: “We have to climb a mountain, but looking at the behaviour and preparations of the major political parties and the government, it looks like they aren’t even prepared to climb a hill. Therefore, we have to doubt their true intentions and the possibility of elections in November.”

The media pulls things out of context for a sensational headline and this is how my remarks came out in the papers: ‘Former Chief Election Commissioner Rules Out November Elections’. This wasn’t surprising, but what took me aback was that most political leaders believed the distorted headline rather than my clarification.



GUEST COLUMN
Bhojraj Pokharel

One thing we can say with certainty is that elections are the only way out. The people want elections, the international community is united in favour of elections, the prestige of the frontline political leadership is tied up with holding polls in November, and there is a government whose sole mandate is to hold elections. Still, elections are uncertain. Why?

None of the parties is against eventual polls, they just want to have it under conditions and at a time favourable to themselves. The government has failed to show from the very beginning through its activities that it is focused on its mandate of holding elections. The four main parties are not speaking with a united voice, seem to be afraid of what the results will be, and are prone to making contradictory statements. The smaller parties are even more insecure about their status.

With the same style, process, leadership and behaviour witnessed in the first CA, a majority of Nepalis are doubtful that the new CA will be any different. Unless this issue is addressed, it is difficult to create an election wave

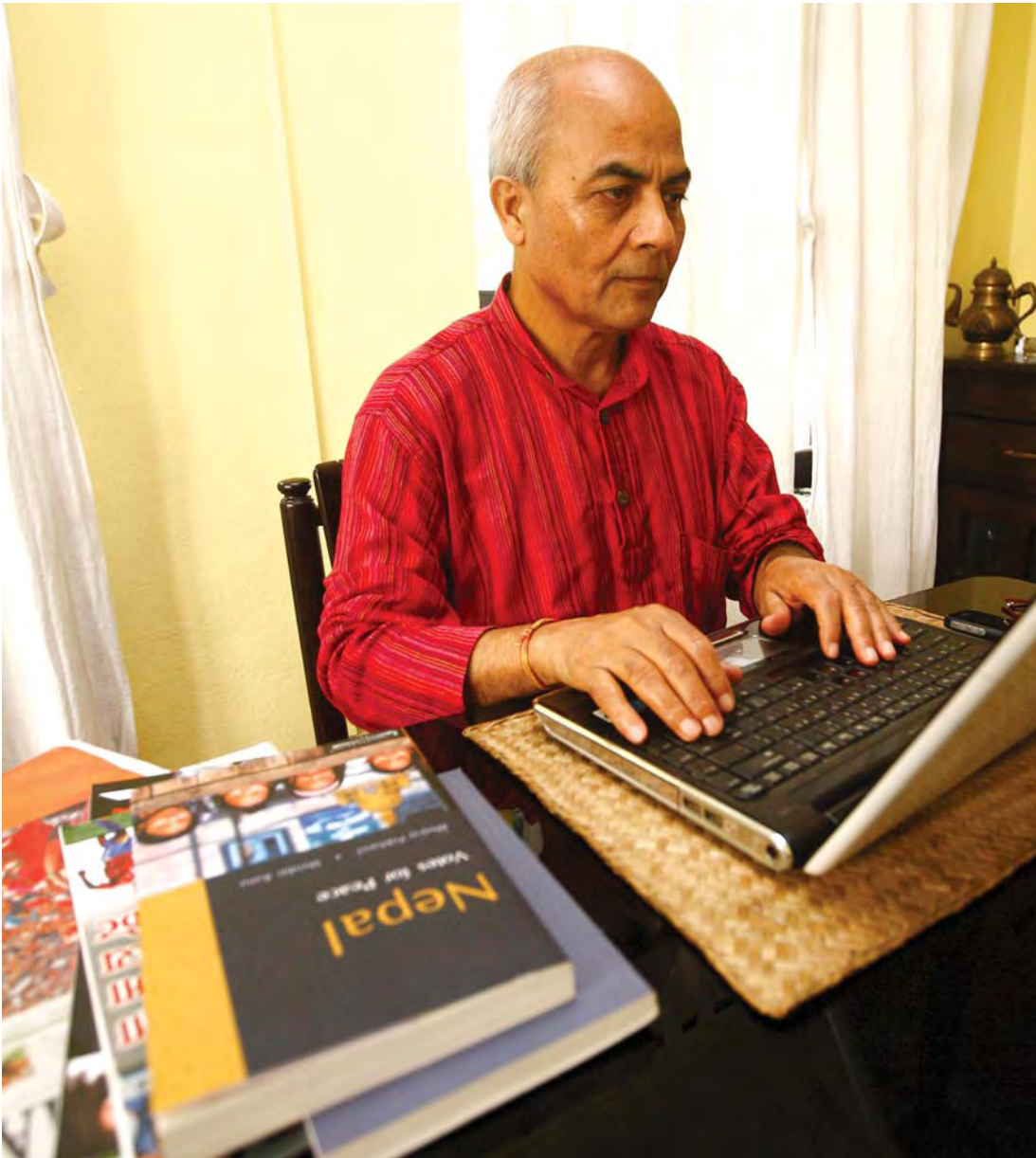
We could ram polls through in November, but will the CA thus elected be able to write a new constitution?

out of thin air. But it is clear that if elections aren’t held soon the current state of hopelessness will increase the political anarchy in the country. We also need elections to end the constitutional limbo, restore the power and independence of the judiciary, and to free it from the shadow of the executive. But while the Election Commission has shown it can hold polls in November despite all obstacles, there isn’t the same sense of urgency and seriousness among the political forces.

Every political party has the right not to contest an election, but the opposing parties say they are being intentionally sidelined. If true, this can lead to a hostile and confrontational election environment. This is not just a parliamentary election, and preparations for new elections are being built on the ruins of the old Constituent Assembly.

Even though all political forces were represented in the previous House, they failed to write a constitution even in the extended period. So how can we be convinced that the new CA can write a constitution acceptable to all if some political forces remain out of the process?

The lesson from the 2008 election is that political preparedness and necessary political will are more important than sorting out the technical issues and logistics for polls. Most of the political players are the same as they were five years ago, except for Girija Prasad Koirala. The 2008 polls happened only after all the political forces were willing to agree on the election, and we haven’t yet reached that stage this time round. The same contentious issues of delineation of constituencies, extending voter registration time, and adding seats have



bedeviled poll preparations this time too.

We could ram an election through in November, but the questions remains: can a CA not represented by all major political forces ensure peace and a new constitution? Last week, there were positive signs that all forces would be brought into the election process, but that hope did not last long.

There are now two alternatives: have elections on 19 November no matter what, or put off the date to bring everyone into the fray.

There are pros and cons to both options. We have to take the less risky

path, one that will provide a more stable solution to the country’s long-term interests. Elections are meant to address conflict and should not be the trigger for further conflict.

We have seen countries which have been destroyed by post-election violence. We have to hold polls when the assembly that is elected has the best chance of finalising a new constitution. 🇳🇵

Bhojraj Pokharel was the Chief Election Commissioner during the 2008 elections and his book, Nepal: Votes for Peace is reviewed (overleaf).

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of worst alternatives

Bhojraj Pokharel's book on the 2008 polls is a manual for conducting post-conflict elections and has lessons for November

period but lost it and had to rewrite everything from scratch while on a sabbatical at Harvard. The book, co-authored with peace researcher Shrishti Rana, could have been more tightly edited and better organised. It has frequent and distracting references to the 'Chief' whenever Pokharel cuts away to quote himself in his own book. But it contains insights into the difficulties of conducting elections at a time of political deficit.

The main message is that one cannot be rigid about rules in a post-conflict election. "The peace process was more important than the election, so we were driven by politics and not by electoral technicalities," Pokharel explained to me this week.

Pokharel considered himself a 'manager', or 'an umpire in a game between unequal teams' because one of the protagonists still had an army. The Maoists had to be repeatedly appeased. For example, they threatened to walk out if they didn't get the hammer and sickle election symbol. "In a normal election, a lot of the things we did would have been unacceptable," Pokharel admits now.

Elections were set for June 2007 and postponed twice mainly because political parties, as now, were scared of losing. The Maoists demanded full PR and declaration of a republic, there were disagreements over threshold, constituencies, number of seats – all going to prove how little electoral politics has progressed in five years.

With the benefit of hindsight, Pokharel would have done some things differently. The authors heap fulsome praise on UNMIN and Ian Martin, but one has to read between the lines to gauge how reluctant UNMIN was to investigate intimidation and threats by cantonment Maoists. Martin first tells Pokharel the

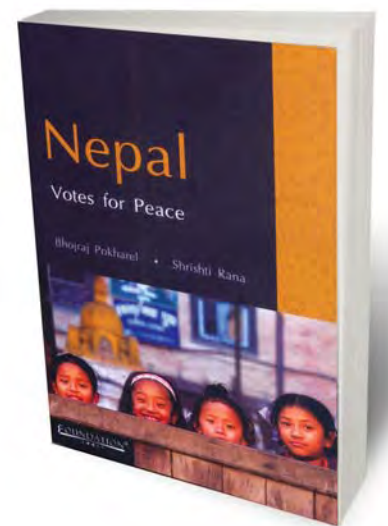
allegations can't be investigated because no formal complaint was lodged and later says parties to the peace process did not give UNMIN the mandate for enforcement actions. The book confirms India's role in terminating UNMIN with an Indian ambassador referring to it as a 'white elephant'.

Pokharel admits there were irregularities on E-Day and notes 'allegations' that Baburam Bhattarai got more votes than there were voters in his Gorkha constituency. Positive reports from election observation missions helped the EC create pressure on all parties to accept the election results. Pokharel's conclusion: 'I admit elections were not perfect. Yet it achieved what was intended – making the former rebels accept the democratic process and put away their weapons forever.'

As it turned out, the Maoists would have won by a larger majority if they hadn't insisted on a mixed system and the NC would have benefited if it hadn't opposed the Maoist demand for more PR seats. Everyone miscalculated and most of all the Maoists, who never expected to win.

The Constituent Assembly was the most representative elected legislature in Nepal's history. Nepal was the first Asian country to have one-third women in parliament, but only 10 per cent of the candidates who got party tickets were women, including the Maoists. Pokharel quips: 'It seemed women were good enough to be soldiers, but not election candidates.'

Pokharel and Rana interviewed most important players. An Indian ambassador complains about political leaders begging him to make them prime minister "even for a few days". A chain-smoking Gyanendra Shah confides in



Nepal: Votes for Peace
Bhojraj Pokharel and Shrishti Rana
Cambridge University Press India
Foundation Books, 2013
266 pages, Rs 450

English that he is financially insecure. Maoist Chairman Dahal admits his personal misgivings about federalism. Girija Koirala comes across as a man worried about his legacy and trying till the end to retain some form of monarchy despite his deep distrust of Shah. He tells the authors: "It's not about winning or losing, only dictators win every election."

The Nepali people voted wisely, giving the Maoists the edge but not enough of a majority to write a constitution on their own. Pokharel and Rana present a list of lessons learnt from the 2008 polls: suggesting a threshold of two per cent in future polls, allowing pre-election public opinion surveys, requiring parties to field at least one-third women, including a 'no vote' option in ballot papers, having only three non-political election commissioners, and even using drones for surveillance of voting centres.

Pokharel concludes that, despite flaws, the election was one step forward. But the country took two steps back by squandering the opportunity. The real tragedy is that the politicians still haven't learnt anything. 🇳🇵

KUNDA DIXIT

As Chief Election Commissioner, Bhojraj Pokharel was at the centre of things during the iffy period of elections in 2007-8 and he has lots of stories to tell. *Nepal Votes for Peace* could be a manual for other countries conducting elections after violent conflict and tries to set the record straight about the first election in the world which a Maoist party had contested and won. Pokharel kept a daily diary of the

BIKRAM RAI



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TRC, now!

Editorial, *Rajdhani*, 28 August

राजधानी

After 1,352 ex-combatants entered the Nepal Army in June this year, 70 more were inducted as officers at a ceremony in Kharipati this Monday, bringing one chapter of the peace treaty to a formal end. In light of the decade long insurgency, the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) and the extended peace process, this event marks a milestone in Nepal's modern history.

While one aim of the peace process has been somewhat fulfilled, perpetrators of war era crimes have gone largely unpunished. Gorkha's Nanda Prasad and Ganga Adhikari (*pic, above*) are two among thousands of family members seeking justice for their loved ones. The couple has been on hunger strike on and off since January and came to the limelight a few months ago due to their dogged persistence. Even though the government promised to pursue their son's killers, who belong to the

UCPN (M), there are major roadblocks. Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai, in particular, have been threatening "stern consequences" against those demanding justice. Considering the elderly couple's deteriorating health, there is a need to fast-track the case. However, without a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in place, others have no recourse to justice.

15,000 Nepalis died in the insurgency and many more were injured, but in the seven years since its end there has been little to be hopeful about for victims and their families. Each successive government since the 2006 Jana Andolan has failed to establish a TRC and provide relief, compensation, and rehabilitation to those affected by the conflict.

A TRC bill, which the Khil Raj Regmi led government attempted to push through an ordinance earlier this year, has been the subject of judicial inquiry after activists claimed it was unfair to victims and sought revision in court. It is the responsibility of the state to come up out a solution that doesn't alienate the families of those killed and disappeared. The parties that have established themselves as the vanguard of the CPA must also understand this before it is too late. Only a TRC can ensure that a reconciliatory peace process reaches its logical end.

Overloading caused Sita crash

Kantipur, 30 August

कान्तिपुर

An investigation into the crash at Kathmandu airport on 28 September last year of a Lukla-bound Sita Air flight has concluded that it was caused by passenger and cargo payload that exceeded the plane's maximum takeoff weight.

Nineteen people, including 12 tourists, five Nepali passengers and crew were killed when the Dornier aircraft stalled soon after takeoff, crashed and burned only 450m east of the runway on the banks of the Manohara. The investigation report said the plane weighed 5,914kg when the maximum takeoff weight allowed for



a Lukla flight is 5,836 kg. The aircraft manifest logged 5,834 kg, but this did not include extra baggage onboard.

Airlines usually calculate passenger load based on 75kg per passenger, but many of the non-Nepali passengers weigh much more on average. The pilots had a conversation about bird

activity, but took off anyway. However, air traffic control noticed abnormal climb after takeoff and asked if there was a problem. The pilot replied "Uncertain ... bird hit." Airport CCTV cameras also show sparks coming out of the starboard engine during the takeoff run. The plane then turned and nosedived into Manohara soon after. Stall warnings sounded in the cockpit before impact.

The report concludes that the crash was a combination of overloading, engines producing deficient power, and a possible bird strike. It has recommended increasing the calculation for average weight of a foreigner to 95kg and for a Nepali to 75kg.

Rounding up the corrupt

Interview with Shreedhar Sapkota, spokesperson of Centre for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, 25 August, *Himal*

हिमाल

Himal: What led to the arrest of so many high ranking government officials?
Shreedhar Sapkota: We had ample evidence against officials involved in corruption. And then those who are caught are also providing testimony implicating others.

How long will the arrest campaign continue for?
This is our day-to-day job and not a campaign. We made these arrests after collecting evidence for a long time. There are still many who will be arrested soon. For us action speaks louder than words so you'll see the results of our investigation soon.

Will the CIAA also go after high profile political leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahal for embezzling funds meant for ex-combatants?
CIAA chief, Lok Man Singh Karki, has already made it clear that if anyone has misused his/her authority they will be caught irrespective of their stature. I don't think I need to repeat it.

Won't introducing and enforcing stronger rules and regulations be better in controlling corruption?
Since Nepal has already ratified international treaties against corruption some laws and acts need to be formulated accordingly. But those people working honestly need not be worried about our investigations.



NEPALI TWEETS

Girish Giri

बन्दुक बोकेर सत्ताको भयाङ्ग बनिदिएका अभाग्यमध्य केहि सेनाको अधिकृत बनेछन्। देशभक्तिको मार्गमा स्वागत छ

The unlucky few who carried guns to pave the path for power have become army officers now. Welcome to the patriotic path.

sarojraj

आम जनताले रामेश्वर खनालभन्दा रेखा थापालाई बढी चिन्छन् र गोविन्दराज जोशी र रामहरि जोशीवीचको फरक छुट्टयाउन सक्दैनन् ! #तथ्य

The public recognises Rekha Thapa more than Rameshwar Khanal and most of them cannot tell apart Govinda Raj Joshi and Ramhari Joshi! #fact

Anbika Giri

चिन्ताजान चाहिन्छ, घर कहाँ? बा के गछेन? पढाई कति? विहे भो ? जागिर के? तलब कति ? दुकाले सोधे हुन्छ ! #हामीनेपाली

Where are you from? What does your father do? Married? Job? Salary? You can ask just about anything without even being acquaintances! #UsNepalis

हरि शर्मा

डलर सारै उलाउने भो !! यो दर्शमा लुगामाफाटा ससामाग्री न किन्न नै सकिने भो न बन्द नै !

Dollar leapfrogs! It is going to be tough buying and selling stuff this Dasain!

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #25

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result of interviews is about Nepalis' opinion on the upcoming elections.

Do you think any party will win majority seats in the upcoming CA elections?
No **57.4%**
Don't know **25.7%**
Yes **16.1%**
Won't say **0.8%**

What criteria will you base your vote on?
Candidate **25.2%**
Parties' policy **23.6%**
Actions of party leaders **17.4%**
Issues raised by parties **11%**
Election mandate **10.2%**
Don't know **8.0%**
Candidate's ethnicity **2.4%**
Won't say **2.1%**

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Left: High Level Political Mechanism
Right: Opposition Alliance
Centre: "How can we possibly be more flexible?"

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in Kantipur, 26 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Since India is behind Nepal’s elections, polls will definitely be held in November. ”

Chairman of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Narayan Man Bijukchhe in *Naya Patrika*, 29 August

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Guy's jatra and Tij

And now for something completely different. In today's class we will take a look at the tremendous strides Nepal has taken in the sphere of gender equality.

In Sunsari, a bunch of guys have said enough is enough and have set up a Father's Group to counter the local Ama Samuha because they are sick and tired of being slapped in the face by their wives when they come home drunk every night. At last, Nepali men are showing that they have the gonads to stand up against corporal punishment. The local chapter of the Father's Group has vowed to spread awareness about VAM (Violence Against Men) which they say has taken epidemic proportions. They have issued a 12-point list of demands, which includes men also being allowed to take a holiday on Tij.



that Guy Jatra is the time when us macho menfolk of the world's youngest syndicated republic get a temporary licence to make complete asses of ourselves by behaving just as we do every other day of the year.

Now, Tij is a festival in which members of the female species from all walks of wife re-dedicate themselves to their profession by undertaking 24-hour relay hunger strikes at cardinal points in the city to wish their present or

future husbands health, wealth, and happiness. Those who, for technical reasons, don't wish their current spouses to have any of the above, will have no other alternative but to move on to the seventh phase of their agitation which, they hasten to warn, is going to be decisive and could turn violent. Anyway, it's the thought that counts. Some of the more passionate women I know say they will not even swallow their saliva during this period as they pray intensely for

their husbands to get a Korean work visa so that they will be left alone for four years. Good luck.

And just to allay concerns about your manhood, the Sunsari chapter of Father's Group has issued a short questionnaire to ascertain whether you have what it takes to be a full-blown Nepali Alfa Male. (Caution: readers who are currently eating are warned in the interest of public safety to stop doing so and have barf bags handy.)

Q: As a just-about-average Nepali male, what do you do when you are by yourself, and certain that no one is looking:

- ☐ Put your hand in your pocket and vigorously attend to a subterranean itch.
- ☐ Attend to aforementioned itch even if someone is looking, after all it's an emergency.
- ☐ Go to a nearby mirror and squeeze blackheads from your nose cone.
- ☐ Sharpen the non-flammable end of a matchstick and use it as NASA would the robotic arm of the Mars Explorer to reach hitherto unexplored and remote caverns in your

mouth cavity containing fossil remains of last year's Dasain goat and dispatch the specimen for further olfactory inspection and disposal.

An essential feature of human existence is breathing and for this it is of paramount importance that we keep our pulmonary tubes clear. The user manual that comes with every male Nepali lays down strict procedures to periodically clean our carburetor filters. Most models have an automatic self-clearing device which at regular intervals dislodges obstructions with a sharp intake of air through the nostril which propels said glob from the nasal cavity into the oral cavity whence it can be either defenestrated with a smart 'pthoo' through the window into the street below, or ingested into the alimentary canal as a protein-rich nutrient. Either way, it is a disgusting habit that all Nepalis proudly call our own.

If you ticked all of the above, congratulations. You are the proud recipient of this year's Guy Jatra Mr Revolting Nepal Contest and the plaque will be handed over to you on Tij by the UML's Mr and Ms Nepal.



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