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संविधान सभा सदस्य निर्वाचन, २०७३

मतपत्रमा छाप लगाउने सही तरिका

आफ्नो रोजेको चिन्हमा छाप लगाउनुपर्छ

मिश्रित निर्वाचन प्रणालीबाट संविधान सभाको गठन

संविधान सभा ६०९ सदस्य

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NOT IF, BUT HOW

It was inevitable that this month's election was going to be a referendum on federalism. After sifting through the manifestos of the main parties in the fray, it is clear that the only issue that really divides them now is the question of how many federal provinces Nepal should be carved into and on what basis. Ironically, this election is going to be less inclusive than the previous one. The NC and UML are fielding fewer women in direct polls and the UCPN (M) has even cut its women candidates by half. Reports from central and western Nepal in this issue show apathy and disillusionment about polls on 19 November.



VOTE
19 NOVEMBER
2013

DIVIDED WE DON'T RULE
EDITORIAL

PAGE 2

BOYS WILL BE BOYS
by TRISHNA RANA

PAGE 3

(DIS) QUIET IN NEPALGANJ
by MALLIKA ARYAL

PAGE 15

CAMPAIGNING AT HARVEST TIME
by SUBHAS DEVKOTA

PAGE 19

Love Bhim

Love it or hate it, but you can't ignore Sunday morning love you as it goes viral and you can't stop yourself from humming the tune.

PAGE 13

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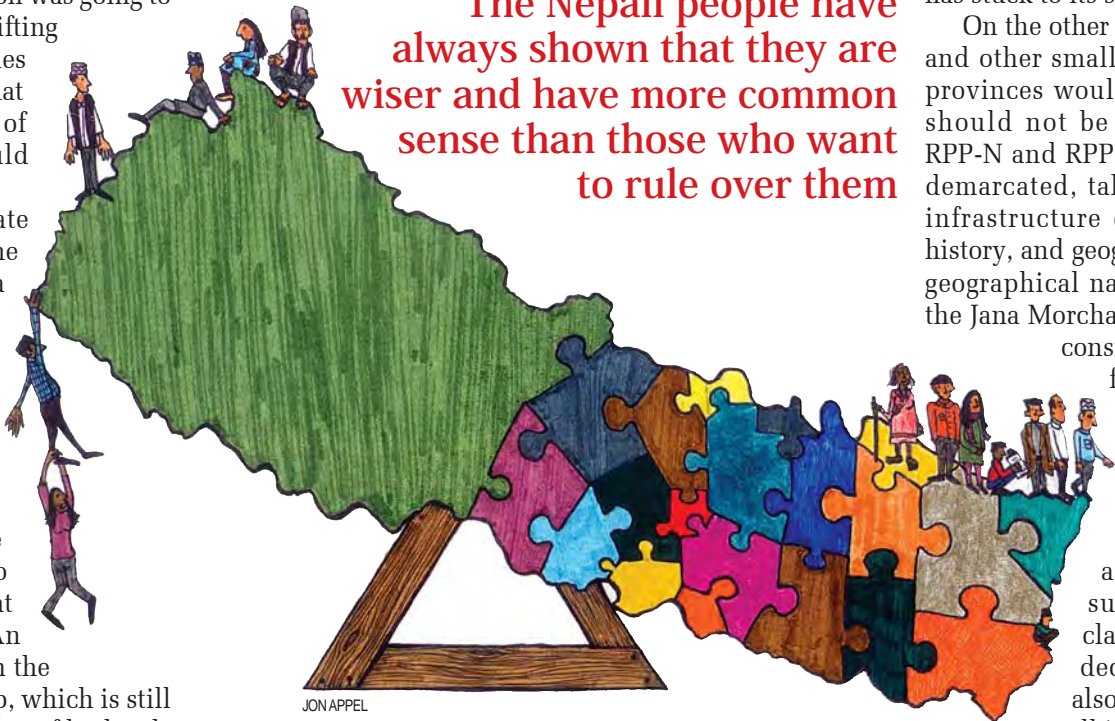
It was inevitable that this month's election was going to be a referendum on federalism. After sifting through the manifestos of the main parties in the fray, it is clear that the only issue that really divides them now is the question of how many federal provinces Nepal should be carved into and on what basis.

There is also disagreement about state structure: whether we should have a prime minister elected by parliament, or a president directly elected by the people. But public opinion polls show the people are fed up with the uncertainty of a parliamentary system and favour directly elected leaders who would be more accountable to them.

One could argue that the real divide is between those who want polls and the 30 or so parties led by the CPN-M who don't. But it now looks pretty certain that the election juggernaut is unstoppable. An acrimonious difference has erupted within the rump Maoists between the main leadership, which is still looking for an accommodation and the group of hotheads led by Netra Bikram Chand, that wants to go back to war. The fact that a faction of a party which was engaged in an armed struggle against the state is actively involved in sabotaging polls has implications not just for the quality of the voting, but also for the Constituent Assembly being able to come up with a workable draft.

Leaving that aside, Nepalis head to the polls with a broad choice between parties and candidates who support federal units named after a single ethnic entity and those who back federal units with multiple-identities or along topographical lines. The UCPN (M), the MJFN, and the Federal Socialist Party composed of Janajati leaders who defected from the UML are for ethnicity-based federalism and have made this their main electoral plank. The

The Nepali people have always shown that they are wiser and have more common sense than those who want to rule over them



UCPN (M), for instance, wants 11 provinces named Limbuwan, Kirat, Tamsaling, Newa, Tamuwan, Magarat, Tharuwan, Kochila, two provinces in the trans-Karnali along geographical lines and even one mysterious 'non-territorial' province for the smaller indigenous groups. It is clear that the UCPN (M) is trying to be everything to everyone and this is just an election stunt. It is not really serious about self-governance for the provinces, whatever they are named.

The FSP led by Ashok Rai wants even more, as many as 14, ethnicity-based provinces that include autonomous regions for Sherpas, Mithila, and Jadan in northwestern Nepal. The MJF-N's formula is identical to the UCPN (M) for ethnic autonomy and self-determination, but the party

has stuck to its slogan of One Madhes.

On the other hand, the Nepali Congress, UML, TMLP, and other smaller parties feel having more than seven provinces would be unviable and say those provinces should not be named after single ethnicities. The RPP-N and RPP-D agree and also want provinces to be demarcated, taking into account economic viability, infrastructure development including hydropower, history, and geography. They want the provinces to have geographical names. At the fringe of this formation is the Jana Morcha of Chitra Bahadur KC who is garnering considerable support for being vocally against federalism itself.

From all this, it is clear that the result of this election will be keenly watched to gauge public support for ethnicity-based federalism. There are serious misgivings among Nepal's neighbours as well as donor groups that previously supported autonomy for the backward classes. What Nepal really needs is genuine decentralisation and self-governance that also gives the marginalised a voice. You can call it what you want.

Nationwide public opinion surveys carried out over the past four years by Himalmedia (publisher of the *Nepali Times*) have shown that three-fourths of respondents have consistently said ethnicity-based federalism is a bad idea. Disaggregated data even show that 78 per cent of Madhesi caste groups and 58 per cent of Madhesi ethnic groups were against ethnic federalism. The proportion of respondents from the Newar community who think ethnicity-based federalism is wrong is over 80 per cent.

The Nepali people have always shown that they are wiser and have more common sense than those who want to rule over them and this election (if it is free and independent) once more will be proof of that.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

MORNING AFTER

It all boils down to the same question: is a flawed election pushed by foreigners better than no elections at all ('The morning after', Editorial, #678)? Outsiders had to step in because Nepali leaders couldn't agree on power sharing and simplistically felt that elections would set everything right. But that plan is structurally unsound because it destroyed two institutions of democracy with one blow: the judiciary and the executive. All this is going to backfire badly on the Indians and of course us Nepalis will pay the price.

Joshi

- By claiming that the upcoming elections is being foisted upon us and implying that the Nepali people don't want it, *Nepali Times* is disrespecting our aspirations to have full-fledged democracy. We have a lot to achieve and the country needs to move on. If this paper has a better alternative than elections, surprise us.

Ram

- Does the editor have a better solution than elections? If not, he should stop fanning hopelessness. Even Bihar of the 90s fixed itself, so Nepal too will get better. But educated folks need to think positively.

Sonics

- '... a corruption watchdog headed by a character with shady

dealings with spooks and godmen is on a political witch hunt ...', this is why the upcoming election is fatally flawed. It is being supervised by crooks answerable to outside puppet masters not the Nepali people.

Mum

CITIZEN CANDIDATE

I think Nepal needs its own version of the Aam Aadmi Party ('Citizen candidate', Ajaz Ashraf, #678). There are some promising activist groups like Bibeksheel Nepali who have fielded independent candidates in some constituencies, but they have too much of an elite base and not enough grassroots penetration to pull off a win. The issue with small parties and independent contenders is that when elections are tightly contested, as the upcoming one is expected to be, if you vote for the candidate you like the most, you could end up electing the candidate you like the least. Also, there is always the question of how effective one, two or five independent candidates can be in a 601-member assembly.

Aideeah

VOTING WITH VENGEANCE

Thank you Bihari K Shrestha, your pieces are always superb but this time you have out-Biharied yourself by succinctly narrating the whole saga of regional politics ('Voting with a vengeance', #678). You have defrocked the high priests of Nepal and exposed their duplicity, expediency, and chicanery while also reminding us of the adventures or misadventures of our

guides from south of the border.

Grimalji

- As suggested by Bihari Shrestha, let's all take a pledge this time to vote for new faces and save the nation.

Bhaicha

- People voted for the Maoists in the last CA because they were new faces. But what difference did they make and how much can we expect from new faces from this election if the entire house we are living in is rotted from the foundation up?

Ram Lal

FREE, FAIR, FEAR-FREE

Pahadis and Madhesis are all basically Nepalis and have been living together harmoniously for generations and they would like to continue doing so ('Free, fair, and fear-free', Anurag Acharya, #678). For example majority of the people in Jhapa and Morang don't want to be separated from Ilam and Dhankuta. Likewise majority of those living in Nawalparasi would like to maintain linkages with Palpa-Tanahu. Why not ask for the people's opinion through some kind of referendum? Give them a chance to choose their partners in the forthcoming state restructuring. Is this not a more democratic way?

Daniel Gajraj

AGAINST THE CURRENT

So sad to learn about white water rafting expert and entrepreneur David Allardice's death ('Against the current', Billi Bierling, #678). I met

David once when I was in Nepal and his energy was infectious. Thanks to him for giving us the Last Resort and bringing adventure back into the life of Nepalis and visitors. I would also like to commend the work that the Last Resort has been doing with the local community.

Ravi

ROOTED

There's nothing new to this story, sounds like one of those NGO paid articles ('Rooted in the grassroots', Elelyn Hartz, #678). *N7*, would you stop being a mouthpiece for donor agencies, NGOs/INGOs and get us real, interesting stories from real Nepal?

Nepali

COMEBACK CATS

It is wonderful to see that Nepal's conservation efforts are being applauded and emulated by the international community ('The comeback cats', Kashish Das Shrestha, #678). The success of our local model of conservation which has local community and people at the centre of all activities is the only way to avoid human-animal conflict. I hope Nepal's snow leopard conservation will encourage the protection of other rare species of animals and plants as well.

Avinash Karki

- This is a step in the right direction. Kudos to the signatories of the Bishkek treaty. And it's highly encouraging to know that Nepal's conservation efforts are bearing results.

Ramesh P

DYING TO GO TO NEPAL

I don't know whether to laugh or cry at this week's Backside, but I do hope the Tourism Board is reading this column, they'll have a blast for sure ('Dying to go to Nepal', #678). I have visited Nepal twice and the last experience was equally unforgettable. I went to Norvic to complain of chest pain and I almost collapsed for two reasons: the exorbitant consultation fee and being required to run on a treadmill. The doctor didn't diagnose properly, in the end a younger ER doctor stationed at the airport prescribed me much needed relief: acid reflux. But I'll be back, god willing, next year to meet up again with some very lovely local folks (this one is sincerely true).

Tennessee

- This is so true, so funny, and so sad. Satire at its best.

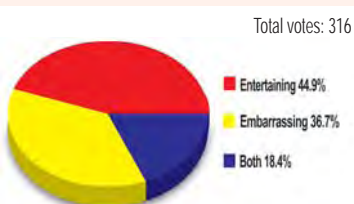
Jug



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #679

Q. What do you think of Bhim Niroula's viral video on YouTube?



Weekly Internet Poll # 680. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Are you going home to vote in 19 November elections?



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Boys will be boys

Unlike the 2008 elections, this month's second attempt at electing a new Constituent Assembly is a predominantly male affair. 'Weak' women candidates are being fielded against top



HERE WE GO
Trishna Rana

national leaders in the direct ballot and female candidates in the PR lists are mostly there because parties are required to fulfil their quotas.

Out of over 6,000 candidates from 130 parties who registered for the First Past the Post (FPTP) race this year about 600 are women. This gender imbalance existed in the 2008 elections too, but what has changed is the commitment of the three major parties in upholding gender parity. All three have cut down on their FPTP tickets for females: 21 and 24 women respectively from the NC and UML, down from 26 and 27 five years ago.

The most glaring change is in the UCPN (M) which had 43 Maoist women candidates running for direct polls in 2008, but has slashed



DIVAKAR CHHETTRI

that to 26 this time. Fresh out of the jungles, the Maoists must have felt compelled to maintain their revolutionary zeal, even if symbolically, since one third of their guerrilla force was female. However, during its seven years of mainstream politics, the party has proved that its commitment to equality and fairness is just lip service.

What message does it send to young women across Nepal when a party gives the green signal for its male leader to

Pushing women into the CA through proportional representation and ignoring them in direct polls reeks of tokenism

contest elections from two constituencies and then turns to its female cadre and tells them they cannot have tickets?

Theoretically, Nepal should have no problem surpassing the 33 per cent female representation in the CA, stipulated by the interim constitution. Of the country's 26 million population, more than half are women and there are 6.1 million registered female voters this year compared to 5.9 million male voters. But pushing women onto the assembly floor en masse through proportional representation seats just for the sake of meeting the quota is pure tokenism.

To really gauge how much progress women have made and how ready Nepali society is to see women in positions of high political power, far larger

numbers of female candidates need to compete against each other and against men in the FPTP race.

They don't have to be professional politicians, but they also shouldn't be hand-picked daughters and wives with no other qualification than blood ties to influential male politicians. This encourages nepotism and corruption. In a country where mothers' groups and female health volunteers have improved development indicators of many rural communities in the absence of the state, there should really be no dearth of potential candidates.

Some of the 600 female contenders in the upcoming November elections will be competing against male political heavyweights in their constituencies. For example, Pratima Gautam of the NC and former parliamentarian Nilam Barma of the National Madhes Socialist Party will have to face senior UML leader

Madhav Kumar Nepal in the Kathmandu 2 and Rautahat 1 constituencies.

While these seemingly uneven match-ups pose a challenge, female candidates can still hope to win through strong and strategic campaigning. The playing field also needs to be levelled where resources are concerned. While her male counterparts travel in helicopters and SUVs with large entourages, former CA member and current candidate for UML in Dang 2 Shanta Chaudary has to go door-to-door on foot asking for rice so that she can finance her campaign.

This is where the Election Commission should step in. While the exhaustive election code of conduct lays down rules on even the colour of pamphlets, why can't it stipulate that all candidates get equal campaign funding from the mother party regardless of gender or seniority?

Even if female candidates end up losing this November, math needs to be used more favourably in the future: if more women contest overall, the representation will eventually balance out. And although the experience of our South Asian neighbours has shown that having women in top political posts does not automatically translate into gender parity, it won't hurt to give them a chance. ■

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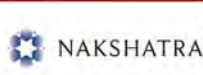
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About time

Emerging British novelist, Ned Beauman, was in Kathmandu this week for the Nepal Literature Festival. In his second book, *The Teleportation Accident*, which was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the 28-year-old takes readers on a journey through history with the help of his German protagonist. *Nepali Times* met with Beauman to talk about his inspirations and writing style.



BIKRAM RAI

Nepali Times: Tell us about your writing habits? Do they change when travelling?

Ned Beauman: I deliberately didn't bring a laptop on this trip because I felt like if you have a laptop, you'll spend more time in the hotel room. I've been commissioned to do a short story for a newspaper in the UK, so I'm going to do that all by hand. Normally I just write with the laptop at the kitchen table in my apartment in Brooklyn, New York.

I am travelling to the Riau islands in Indonesia soon because I have an idea for a book set there. That's the first time I'm travelling to a distant place specifically to look around and see what it's like. To be honest, though, I get a lot more ideas in a library than I do from travelling. Travelling is useful only to the extent that you get plenty of idle time in the backs of cabs or waiting for planes. All of that is good for developing ideas. But in principle, you could replicate those conditions at home.

Your first two novels were praised for their vivid evocations of the past, be they 1930s Los Angeles or Weimar Germany. What is your research process like?

For the first two books, it was just hours and hours in libraries and exploring some locations as well. My third book, which is coming out next year, is set in London in 2010, so I didn't have to do much research. But with the book I'm working on now, because it's a historical setting again, I was faced with the prospect of a lot more library time and I couldn't really face it, so I'm trying to develop a method now where I want to write a book that feels like it's been meticulously researched, but I haven't actually had to do anything. I've done all that work for the first two books and they have really given me a sense of how an interesting historical footnote or detail is shaped, so now I feel like I can fabricate them plausibly.

Your thoughts on South Asian literature?
Honestly, I haven't really read any South Asian literature that I can think of. But after attending the festival here and meeting so many writers from the region, I am going to make sure to get my hands on some when I get home. I also want to read the works of Nepali writers. I am taking back a copy of *La.Lit*, the literary magazine, so I'm looking forward to that.

[illegible]

EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Fly Miami

Qatar Airways will fly to Miami beginning June next year making the coastal town its sixth destination in the US. The airlines announced it will offer non-stop flights from its hub in Doha four-times a week.



Ford power

According to the latest Polk global vehicle registration data for the first half of 2013, Ford Focus was the bestselling vehicle nameplate globally. Also, in the same data Ford Fiesta was ranked as the fourth best-selling vehicle overall and the world's best selling subcompact vehicle.



Branching out

NMB Bank has extended its branchless banking services to food insecure communities in Doti district. The bank in collaboration with the World Food Program will now provide cash distribution services to beneficiaries in Ladagada and Pokhari VDCs.

KOBE Flat magic

Bajuratra Electronics, a subsidiary of Jyoti Group, launched Kobe tv in the market. The affordably priced LED TV is available in two models: Kobe 22KB and 2K13.

Decking up

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal in partnership with Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office conducted a clean-up campaign in Ranipokhari on Saturday. Employees of both institutions worked together to clean the area for the upcoming festival of Tihar.



So good

Sony Mobile Communications introduced its new product Sony Xperia Z1 in the market on Sunday. The premium waterproof camera is packed with a wide range of attractive features.

Easy breezy

According to Doing Business 2014, a World Bank Group report, over the past year Nepal has made it much easier to start a new business. The same report ranks Nepal 105th out of 189 global economies.



Garbage energy

Park Village Resort, a KGH hotel, hosted a lunch for Kathmandu Metropolitan City, US Embassy, Clean Energy Bank, Nepal Chamber of Commerce, and Ministry of Local Development to discuss the possibilities of bringing a waste-to-energy plant from the US to Nepal.

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MOTHER AND SON: Chumba hugs his mother, Chhang Palmo, after returning to his village in northern Gorkha after 30 years. One of the schools he has built (below).

The return of the prodigal son

Now a famous healer, Chumba Lama returns to his mother and home village to help others

GUNA RAJ LUITEL

Chumba Lama looked into the small house and called: “Who is inside?” His mother recognised that voice immediately even though she hadn’t heard it for three decades. Tears rolled down her wizened cheeks as she hugged her son and looked him over from all sides. “I was crying for 30 years, my son,” his mother said in Tibetan. “I couldn’t die without seeing you.”

Chumba had finally come home to his village of Chhekamparo of northern Gorkha district after leaving it when he was seven years old. His mother, Chhang Palmo, had been raped by a Khampa guerrilla in 1971 when she was a teenager. After giving birth, she went to the father but he kicked and chased her out of his house.

Chhang Palmo’s family treated her like an outcast and her neighbours didn’t help. She worked the tsampa and potato fields carrying her newborn on her back. Sometimes, when she was really hungry, she had to



steal corn from a neighbour’s field. Chhang Palmo sold liquor and sometimes her own body to take care of her baby.

When Chumba was seven, his maternal uncle who was in the Indian Army took him to Kathmandu. Today, 30 years

later, Chumba still remembers the aroma of the rare rice meal his mother cooked on his last night in Chhekamparo. She gave him a Rs 10 note the next morning, it was all she had.

It took them eight days to walk to Gorkha and the little

boy had to run to keep up with his uncle. He was taunted and teased by the lowlanders: “Stinky, dirty Bhote.” But even that was better than being called a “bastard” in his village. Chumba was fascinated by blue Sajha buses and

wondered how something as big as a house moved on the road. In Kathmandu, he was agog at the sight of cars and motorcycles and traffic.

Soon after, his uncle died of a heart attack. Chumba became a street child, joining hundreds in Thamel begging from tourists. He competed with stray dogs for leftovers from restaurants, he was bullied and raped by older street children, he sniffed glue, sold marijuana to survive. Every night he slept on the sidewalk under an open sky, using paper boxes as blanket and hugging dogs for warmth. Some tourists gave him pens, which he sold to buy biscuits meant to feed monkeys at Swayambhu.

A Japanese tourist took him to Japan, but he didn’t like it there and returned. He latched on to a Lama guru who sent him to Sri Lanka to be trained in acupressure, where he mastered a four year course in eight months. Later, he met German fashion designer Ute Riedlinger in Delhi and got married.

In Germany, he honed his skills in alternative healing and found his practice and fame spreading far and wide. Today, Chumba travels around the world teaching his own brand of Tibetan breath yoga that he calls Shey Tsum Yoga, named after his home valley in Nepal. A German tv channel is making a program on his life and his autobiography is being published soon.

Chumba was so busy he had forgotten his mother. Recently, on one of his trips leading a tour group to Tibet he ran into a friend and found out that his mother was still alive. The reunion was emotional for both mother and son. Chumba saw his mother was coughing from breathing smoke from her stove, so he bought her a smokeless one. When he came back a year later with his German biographer, he noticed that she had given the stove to a neighbour who didn’t have one.

When he asked his mother what she wanted, she told him to share his knowledge with the entire village. So he has helped build two schools in Tsum Valley and paid for teachers. Since water is a problem, Chumba is helping build a village water supply system.

Chumba says he bears no grudges against his father, holds no rancour for the way he was treated in his early life. He tells others to respect their parents: “It is only when you don’t have the love of your parents you realise how important that is.”

Guna Raj Luitel is the editor of Annapurna Post.

nepalitimes.com

Longer version of this article in Nepali, photo gallery and video of Shey Tsum Yoga



A low pressure trough riding the jet stream is racing across the Tibetan plateau, pushing in wind from the southwest which has brought thick Indo-Gangetic inversion haze up to the Himalayan midhills in Nepal, blocking mountain views. There is some moisture riding on the back of this system which may trigger some afternoon showers in the higher altitudes over the weekend, adding to the snow dumped there over Dasain. Tihar will be hazy in Kathmandu Valley, with minima at 11 celsius.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
19° 12°	19° 11°	19° 12°

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TUFAN NEUPANE in NEPALGANJ

Mamta Thapa was only four when she first held a cricket bat. Two decades on, the vice-captain of the Nepali women’s cricket team, is still as passionate about the game that changed her life.

Twenty-two-year-old Mamta was born in Bihar and spent most of her childhood travelling around India with her father who was in the Indian Army. “Cricket will always be my first love,” she says. “People in India play and watch the sports with such passion that it inspired me to play professionally.”

Mamta, who currently lives in Kohalpur of Banke district with her

initially failing to be selected for the tournament. Her superb wicket-keeping helped Nepal defeat Hong Kong in what she says is one of her most memorable matches. Her hard work and dedication earned her the post of vice-captain the following year.

Her family have been avid supporters and help keep her motivated when she feels overwhelmed trying to juggle her studies and practice. During her time off, Mamta has also dabbled in beauty pageants such as Miss Nepalganj and Miss Madhyamanchal and has been receiving film offers on a regular basis. But the student of Bageshwori Multiple Campus in Kohalpur says she has no plans yet to make the move to the silver screen choosing instead to focus on her game and her degree in rural development.

Despite limited training, resources and less attention compared to the men’s team, the women’s squad has moved up in the rankings. The under-



TUFAN NEUPANE

STANDING UP

Vice-captain of the Nepali women’s cricket team wants teammates to stay focused on the larger picture

sister, travels 15km to Nepalganj everyday for practice. She started her career as a specialist batsman, but has since moved on to keeping wickets and considers England’s star batsman Kevin Pietersen and New Zealand’s captain and wicket-keeper Brendon McCullum as her role models. A regular member of the national team since 2007, the 4 feet 10 inch cricketer has participated in ACC Women’s T-20, Asian Games, and several international U-19 tournaments.

However, the rising star suffered a major setback in 2009 when she fractured her hand during the National Games, which meant she had to remain under complete bed rest for months. “During that time I tried to focus on the positives so I wouldn’t be depressed and worked on improving my game as soon as I was able to get out of bed,” she admits.

Mamta made a remarkable return in 2010 at the Asian Games in China when she was flown into Guangzhou on a day’s notice, after

19 team has been particularly impressive and bagged the ACC Women’s Championship for three years: 2009, 2010, and 2012. But the lack of training, support, and funding becomes painfully apparent when Nepali players are competing at senior level against top international teams. “Unless we have regular trainings, more local and international matches our performance in the international level will not improve significantly,” explains Mamta.

Working with the existing facility, the vice-captain keeps her team focused on the larger picture: the World Cup in 2017. “Although it’s going to be a big challenge to win the World Cup, if we can succeed at such a major tournament, it will encourage young women to take up cricket and see a future for themselves in the game.” 🇳🇵

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Howz that, #656
Best foot forward, #628

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EVENTS

Expansion, an exhibition of paintings by Jaya Shankar Son Shrestha.
29 October to 20 November, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal, (01)4218048, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

TIHARAI AAYO
Nepal celebrates the festival of lights next week.
1 November, **Kag Tihar**, Dipawali kicks off with a puja for the bird of good tidings.
2 November, **Kukkur Tihar**, next up is a puja for man's best friend, woof!



3 November, **Gai Tihar**, celebrate Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, by paying your respects to the cow.
4 November, **Mha Puja**, Newars puja themselves in Kathmandu, and elsewhere people pay homage to Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna.
5 November, **Bhai Tika**, sisters puja their brothers to protect them from Yama, the harbinger of death.



NHUDAYA BHINTUNA, the Newari calendar turns a new leaf. 4 November

Rooftop market, bring your old stuff and sell it for quick bucks or give it away as donations; with music, drinks and snacks.
2 November, 2pm onwards, Sattya Media Collective, Jawalakhel, 9813485716

East to west, an inter-nations dance show, feel the energy, passion and heat of three traditional dance forms – Flamenco (Spain), Charya (Nepal) and Bharat Natyam (India), along with a rare fusion of Kathak and Flamenco; proceeds go to Tewa and Sushila Arts Academy.
Rs 500, 1 November, 5 to 7 pm. St Xavier's Auditorium, 9851135910, (01)5572654/9, lilu@tewa.org.np



BEATNIK ACOUSTIC COMPETITION, show your talents on the acoustic guitar and win up to Rs 15,000.
Registration Rs 2,000, 2 November, 11am, Funky Buddha, Thamel, 9849096621

DINING

Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and an endless supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this cafe, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal*, (01)4424303

Alice restaurant, step in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental, and Japanese cuisine. *Gairidhara*, (01)4429207



CHEZ CAROLINE, exquisite food, glorious sunshine and more. *gam* to 10pm, *Barber Mahal Revisited*, (01)4263070/4187

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Wunjala Moskva, treat your palette to Newari and Russian dishes in the lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams. *Naxal*, (01)4415236

Byanjan Grill, its open patio is a great place to sit, enjoy a book, take in the view, and gorge on delicious cuisine when the hunger kicks in. *Barahi Chok*, *Lakeside-6*, Pokhara, (061)466271



ALFRESCO, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza*, (01)4273999

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, bide your time in the free wi-fi zone as you enjoy wood fired pizzas, home-made pastas and Tibetan gyakok. *Boudha*, 9841484408

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

Chilly Bar and Restaurant, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. *Lakeside*, *Hallanchok*, Pokhara, (061)463614/463163



YINYANG RESTAURANT, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes, or fall into the safety net of its western dishes. *Thamel*, 10am to 10pm, (01)4701510

MUSIC

He's bach, cellist Frank Bernede plays the works of JS Bach; drinks, snacks and dinner after concert. *Rs 1,000*, 8 November, 6pm, *Café des Artes*, *Thamel*, (01)4411778



KRIPA UNPLUGGED, young Nepali musicians give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs.
<http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged>



TIHAR WITH THE FAMILY, celebrate Tihar at a reggae mellow-out with Joint Family International. *Rs 300*, 3 November, 12 to 2pm, *The Yellow House*, *Sanepa*, (01)5553869/22078, <http://theyellowhouse.com.np/contact.html>

Mohit Chauhan live, everyone's favourite balladeer is coming to town. *Rs 500 to Rs 5,000*, 30 November, 4.45pm onwards, *Dasrath Stadium*, *Trippureswor*, 9818842177

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(011) 490114/494, www.dhulikhellodgeresort.com



GENERATION J

Last Thursday, the 11th edition of Jazzmandu hosted its Jazz for the Next Generation music competition at Moksh in Pulchok. Three acts, each consisting of under-30 artists from Kathmandu ranging in size from a duo to a quintet and style from fusion to funk jazzed it out for the title.

With their dynamic tabla, smooth keyboard, and personable female vocalist, Con-tusion with Axata took home this year's top prize. *Nepali Times* caught up with the trio after the competition to get their reaction and their views on the future of jazz music.

Nepali Times: The three of you come from eclectic music traditions. When did you each decide that jazz was something worth exploring?

Yuvash Vaidya (keyboard): For me, it's the attitude of jazz. What is a surprise is the balance between structure and spontaneity, and what happens when those two things are juxtaposed. I like to explore that.

Ashesh K Rai (tabla): You could have

gotten yourself into jazz and might not even realise it. Sometimes I think "What's this jazz thing?" and I finally compare it to my music and I'm like "Oh, I'm doing jazz."

Axata Singh (vocals): Jazz is something totally new to me. I've sung RnB and soul, but I've only just recently gotten into jazz. I started learning jazz with my piano lessons, but singing it has opened up a whole new world.

What needs to happen for the jazz scene to grow in Kathmandu?

Axata: The first thing we need is an attentive audience. Most of the time, people don't care what they're listening to when they're out at restaurants and bars. If more people could respect the genre, it would be great.

Yuvash: Only a handful of people in Nepal listen to jazz therefore jazz musicians are rarely called to perform. Musicians are paid by the amount of crowd they can pull which shouldn't be the case as this leads to artists performing more crowd-pleasers, often at the expense of experimentation or improvisation.

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Medicine

A 23rd-generation
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PICS: BIKRAM RAI

DR WHO (clockwise): Yogendra Gopal Vaidya in his Mangal Bajar clinic which was founded over 70 years ago. Herbs are ground together in formulas refined over 23 generations of trial and research. A worker hand-rolls pills in the courtyard behind Vaidya's clinic.

texts, Ayurvedic medicine uses holistic methods to treat ailments as varied as colds, indigestion, headaches, and rheumatism. Now, newly-opened schools in Ayurvedic practices dot the Kathmandu Valley. But Vaidya holds no degree or certificate. Instead, he relies on a family formula, over 400 years old, that he continues to refine in a space behind his clinic. It is with these formulas that he heals scores of patients and by which he makes his living.

Despite the clandestine status of the Vaidya family's unique herbal recipes, Yogendra makes no pretensions about the medicine's aura. "All these ingredients are available in the world and the market. God gave us only so many plants. It is their unique combination that gives them their healing properties," he explains.

Vaidya points to patients' belief in the effectiveness of the medicine over anything inherent in the ingredients. As society turns to nature in their food products and energy sources, Vaidya explains, they are likely to look to nature for their medicine as well. Business at the clinic is subject to these fluctuations in people's beliefs. Now, with what the healer describes as an overall trend towards nature, business is doing well.

Vaidya returned to work at his father's shop when it became apparent that his family's traditional herbal formulas would otherwise go by the wayside. "I feared for my father's formulas and recipes," he says. "If I didn't return to the clinic, his life's work would disappear." The fate is not an uncommon one in the largely hereditary practice. Vaidya recalls many of his father's friends whose practices dissolved after their children left to pursue other fields. Of six brothers, only Yogendra now practices.

But disinterest in successive generations is not the only threat to many of these clinics' futures. Vaidya fears potential new government regulations would make practicing as he does now more difficult. The new rules could lead to prohibitive costs associated with seeking certification or buying new equipment. Vaidya, who researches and blends by hand with much of the same equipment as his father, would be forced to overhaul his entire process. If the new law requires Vaidya to become certified, his business would be liable to closure at any time.

While Vaidya sees the importance of these kinds of regulations for maintaining safety standards, he wants to make sure they are instituted with the realities of the plants' medicinal properties in mind. Many regulations on herbal medicine, if merely lifted from their Western medicine counterparts, would be "wasteful and unnecessary" when applied to Ayurvedic practices. The idea of an expiration date, for example, while necessary for a chemical compound, wouldn't serve a purpose on a bottle of an oil reduction, which only gets more effective with age. The same goes for an in-house pharmacist. Many of these measures would do little to nothing for patient safety while contributing to driving someone like Yogendra out of business.

Vaidya plans to preserve his family's formulas and safeguard his clinic against regulations by forming a co-operative with colleagues and potential family investors. The investments would provide necessary infrastructure improvements that could be shared among other practitioners. It would also provide a means to maintaining his family's herbal legacy in case he can't find a successor. "When thinking about the future," he says, "you have to think openly." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Amchis wants recognition, #589
You got to have faith, #589
The herbal way of life, #584



Life in paint

A former Freak Street icon uses art to reflect on social issues

LUCIA DE VRIES

Dressed in a white daura-suruwal, 66-year-old Jimmy Thapa (*pic, right*) looks radiant as he sits down to explain his painting. Seeing him now, it is hard to imagine him as the former purveyor of 'Jimmy's Wagon', a hashish outlet on Freak Street in the 70s.

Now a family man, Jimmy, born Saraj Prakash Thapa thinks himself a poet and healer. He has shed the long black locks and oversized glasses. His day begins at 1.30 am when he follows the planets through the sky until daybreak. "I worship the planets and gods each night, which act as a foundation for my latest works," says Jimmy.

Born in 1947 in Lumbini, Jimmy originally wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and join the army. However, the Freak Street motto 'Each man is a universe' influenced him greatly. It sent him off exploring the world and the complexities of his spirit. "Like a yogi, I wanted to know myself and find out how I can heal myself and the world," he explains.

If there is a common thread in Jimmy's work it is the level of intimacy with the subject. His drawing of Boudha Stupa, featuring soft pastel colours, was made during Chyaloh, a festival that takes place every 12 years. Each of his paintings is produced on-site, often under the curious gaze of devotees.

Recently one of his admirers, Prabod Shrestha, opened a shop opposite Hotel Greenwich Village in Sanepa, where the works are displayed. Jimmy never participated in the regular art scene; his

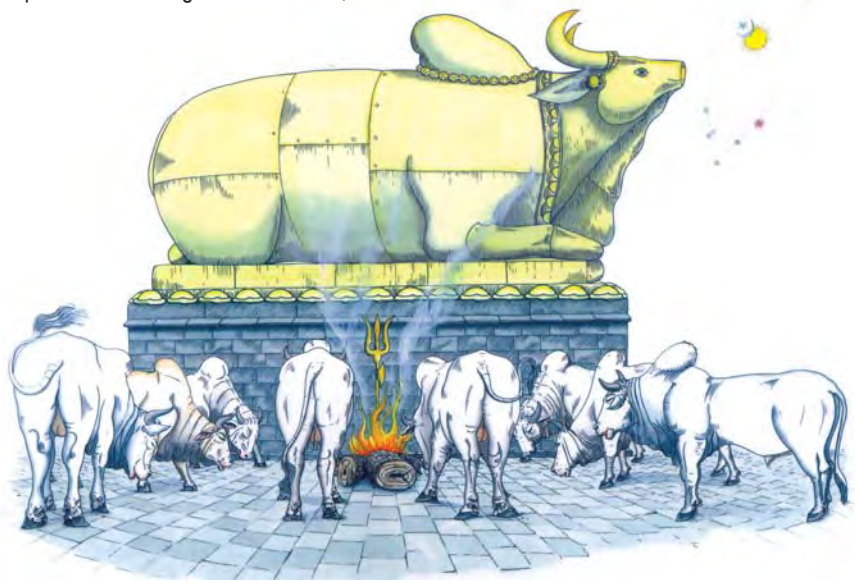


paintings are shown exclusively in bahals.

Jimmy's latest work is deeply personal and shows his concern about the world at large. He adds personal notes to his drawings and how they impact world events. A note next to the image of a Vajrasattva, a bodhisattva, with his consort reads: "At this auspicious moment I appeal for women's liberation. I feel shame to my masculinity when I see the world news."

Among his latest creations are a series of drawings of animals. One of them shows a group of bulls worshipping Pashupatinath, lord of the animals (*pic, below*). The animal lover recently adopted a mother dog and her nine puppies and has been making sure that all the canines in his neighbourhood are sterilised and vaccinated.

Says Jimmy: "I appeal to the world to save trees and treat animals with respect. Nature nurtures and purifies, while mankind destroys and pollutes. But we can live with hope; the truth will win in the end." 🇳🇵





Every year in the fall, in the world of cinema, the awards hopefuls start to come out in their bids to becoming contenders - reaching hopefully for that ultimate golden statue named Oscar.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

This year Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* opened at the Venice Film Festival in August to immense anticipation. Tales of his four-year long labour of love involving blood, sweat and tears, and the hype surrounding the groundbreaking effects and cinematography, created even in my fairly skeptical heart, a fair amount of excitement. And so it is with great delight that I went to see the film, available here now in 3D, and most importantly on the big screen.

I was not disappointed. *Gravity*

is all that it has set out to be: a feat in cinematography, a step forward for cinema. Cuarón has always been far more interested in cinematic form than in narrative, so I will warn the viewers now that while the structure of the film is perfectly sound the actual dialogue is really rather hopeless. If you can accept this and move on, the film will astound you with its visual language and its success in portraying a world that most of us can only imagine in our fondest daydreams.

Gravity, if you don't know already, is set in space - that final frontier, that great unknown. It opens with a view of our beautiful, glowing blue planet. As we are struck dumb by the Earth's luminous beauty, we see a space station in orbit coming towards us. On this space station are Dr Ryan Stone (Sandra Bullock) and the astronaut Matt Kowalsky (George Clooney). Incidentally, for the sake of sheer trivia, there is also an

unfortunate third astronaut who is hardly seen and barely heard who expires fairly quickly. It is just as we are settling into the uncanny but magical feeling that we are experiencing what it must be like to actually be in space that a number of terrifying things happen.

The space station is hit by debris from a Russian satellite, the extraneous astronaut is promptly killed and Stone becomes untethered from the station and is set spinning out into space in a terrifying uncontrolled trajectory that will leave you clutching your seat in an attempt to maintain your own sense of gravity - and therein lies the genius of the film.

As Stone and Kowalsky struggle with every breath to try and reach a habitable space station and come back to our beloved home planet, we struggle with them, caught up in this amazing film that is able, through the maker's genius, to bring us into their terrifying reality. And while all films require a rather large measure of identification with the subject in question, *Gravity* with its visceral cinematography is able to pull you in a manner that I've never quite experienced before.

Some films do become all they set out to be. With *Gravity*, Alfonso Cuarón, at least in my mind, has become a truly great director. One that struggles to realise his vision without compromise no matter how long it takes. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



BIKASH DWARE

MEDIA WATCH: Chief Election Commissioner Nilkantha Uprety inaugurates the media and observation centre at the Election Commission office in Kantipath on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WORD UP: Journalist Hasta Gurung (*centre*) hosts a poetry recital with Urdu poets Abdul Latif Shauk and Abdul Waheed at Nepal Literature Festival on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ACROSS GENERATIONS: Mother and daughter use nanglos to thresh newly harvested rice at Bhaktapur on Monday.



DEVAKI BISTA

ART ATTACK: A visitor looks closely at a painting by Nepali artist Jaya Shankar Son Shrestha at Siddhartha Art Gallery on Tuesday.

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Loving Bhim

Before 20 October, nobody knew of UK based Nepali banker Bhim Niraula even though his YouTube channel already had 590 videos. Those videos barely managed more than 100 hits each. But his belly-jiggling song and dance buffoonery called *Sunday morning love you* with the Aztec ruins and the Sphinx as the backdrop led to an overnight change in fortunes and propelled Bhim to internet stardom.

Love him, hate him, and there are many who do so in equal measure as they engage in a puerile war of words on social media, but you can't ignore him. With lyrics like, "Lady you are attractive, attractive," which the 48-year-old composed himself, it is hard not to hum the tune once you have survived the (somewhat) embarrassing dance routine. Besides who wouldn't want to love their

significant other everyday of the week, well except for Saturday that is?

Sunday morning is rapidly nearing 600,000 unique views as fans from across the globe throng to see Bhim's signature moves on YouTube and like, share, and tweet zealously. Buzzfeed.com, an American site that tracks viral content throughout the web, featured the video on its blogs, offering international viewers a tempting invitation to Bhim's wacky moves. His supporters have even labelled the song Nepal's answer to other nonsensical hits like *Why This Kolaveri Di* and *Gangnam Style*.

For the singer cum song-writer, however, this was no joke. Bhim spent £2,000 making the music video and £300 on recording. He initially wanted to feature a Nepali girl, but says those he approached were too busy. After filming his dance steps in a green room, the studio hired a local model and filmed her walking around a park over a couple of days. Bhim never met her.

The online sensation, however, seems very practical and has modest ambitions. "You can't live on music alone in Nepal. I am in this for personal reasons and I make these



videos because I don't want to stop writing music," he says.

Originally from Dhankuta, Bhim has been living in Reading for the last seven years with his family. He already has two albums *Creation* and *Pratyek Raat* to his name and is planning on releasing a third soon, which he will name *Sunday morning*. And after the raging success of his latest song, Bhim plans to sing in English more often to attract international viewers.

Regardless of whether *Sunday morning* manages to out 'hit' other viral videos including *One Pound Fish* from which it is much inspired, Bhim Niraula has arrived. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch Bhim Niraula's videos

Quality French cuisine in the city is famously hard to come by and the places that do offer it are prohibitively expensive. Two weeks ago, Christian, a designer and artist living in the city for the last seven years, opened Café des Arts - a restaurant that drastically undercuts the competition, but does so at the expense both of quality and range.

The restaurant's unfortunate but temporary signage does little to betray the pleasant, al fresco dining area inside, walls adorned with work by a range of artists including Christian himself. Planning to stage live performances of Bach in the future and with the Velvet Underground playing in the background (a nod to the recent passing of the wonderful Lou Reed), the arts are, as the restaurant's name suggests, of paramount importance here.

Sadly, such passion has not made its way onto the café's menu. While more dishes will be added over time, the current selection relies far too heavily on a mishmash of Nepali snacks and European-esque food of no fixed abode. Indeed, for a restaurant that bills itself as French, there is very little French food on offer at all.

However, the quintessential croque-monsieur (Rs 350) does make an appearance, albeit a



PICS: PM



Café des Arts

tainted one. This humble snack dates back more than 100 years in the cuisine's history and has simple, but strictly defined characteristics - very few of which are adhered to here. Non-descript ham and cheese came without the required béchamel sauce and grilled cheese topping - surely a cardinal sin to even the casual Francophile.

Furthermore, the sandwich had been cramped into a panini press or similar and was made with mass-produced factory bread, rather than homemade. Perhaps the new kitchen and staff are ill-equipped to make their own bread, but then what about the delicious, fresh options available to caterers

from an ever-growing number of great European bakeries?

That aside, we tried the 'Green Village' soup (Rs 250), which was not served with the promised toast and, while well spiced, tasted more like a cumin and coriander-heavy curry base than a dish in its own right.

There was a small serving of pork (from fellow Frenchman François' Tokha farm) with rather overdone, curried vegetables (Rs 600), and a gigantic helping of chicken escalope panée (Rs 600), alongside a side salad and a grainy puree of potato. The escalope was a standout - tender, thin pieces of chicken breadcrumbed and toasted to perfection.

But with so few French options

available, we also sampled the Newari buff set (Rs 290), which was passable, but lacked the garlic and ginger kick the combo is known for.

After overdoing it on the mains (and especially the XL portion of chicken), we decided to ditch dessert, which did at least bring with it the promise of French credentials - the menu offered crepes and a flambé - but I think I'd want the chef to nail the croque-monsieur before I'd let him loose with burning brandy.

Christian was chatty to a fault: very interested in our feedback, but



rather cavalier with his own point of view, which at times bordered on bigotry. It's great that there's a new, cheaper French bistro on the block. But right now, c'est pas le Pérou. 🇳🇵 CC

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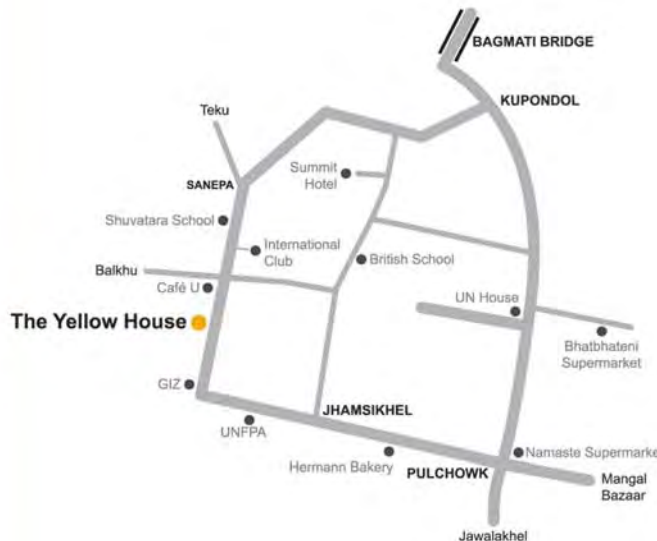
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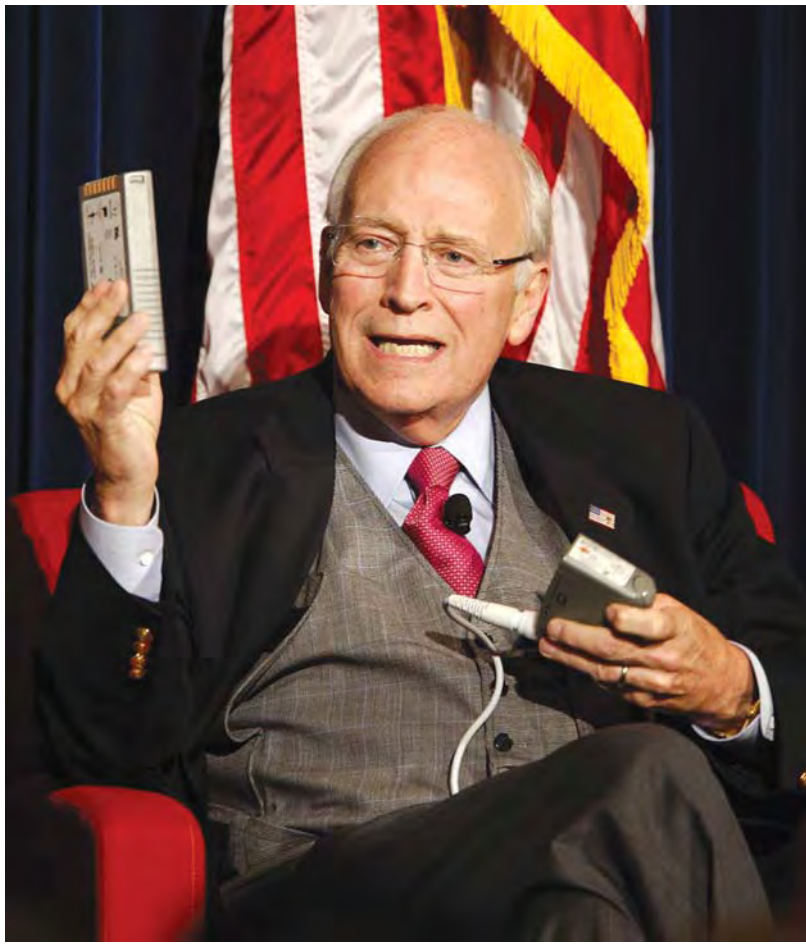


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DAVID MCNEU/WAP

Cheney's change of heart

The way former US vice-president Dick Cheney fought with numerous life-threatening cardiac problems while holding several crucial government posts is stunning. While Nepalis may not have access to the kind of medical

**DHANVANTARI****Buddha Basnyat, MD**

facilities that Cheney had, his ordeals serve as a cautionary tale for the rest of us.

Prevention of heart diseases is obviously the key. However, modern, innovative treatments that the vice president received again and again testify to the marvel of modern medical science.

Cheney started smoking

when he was 12 and soon he was puffing three packs a day. In addition, his daily meal consisted of very fatty food including a dozen doughnuts. At 34, he became the chief of staff to President Gerald Ford during which time he undoubtedly faced numerous tension-filled moments at the White House. Clearly Cheney was asking for trouble and he got it with his first heart attack in 1978 at the age of 37 when he was campaigning for the US Congress. He subsequently had four more attacks in 1984, 1988, 2000, and 2010.

As though these were not enough, Cheney also underwent angioplasty, open heart surgery, and had a pacemaker implanted. More catastrophic interventions followed. He needed an implanted defibrillator, a gadget that would automatically shock his heart if the heart rhythm became

HEAVY HEART: Former Vice-President Dick Cheney shows equipment for the heart pump that he had installed in 2010 after his fifth attack.

dangerously abnormal.

There is an interesting terrorism-related story regarding his defibrillator, when he was vice-president. Fearing a terrorist could assassinate the VP by sending a signal after hacking into his implantable device telling it to shock his heart into cardiac arrest, Cheney's cardiologist ordered the manufacturer to disable wireless features. There are obvious medical risks that a VIP government official faces that ordinary patients are spared.

In 2010 when Cheney was convinced his end was near, he discussed burial plans with his family. He had a left ventricular assist device (LVAD), a battery operated heart pump, implanted just to buy time while he waited for a transplant. After a 20 month wait period he finally received a new heart.

About 4,000 heart transplants are done every year around the world, out of which more than half are carried out in the US. Effective immunosuppressive medicines since the 1980s have been pivotal in the donor heart not being rejected by the patient's immune system. About 75 per cent of transplant patients will easily survive beyond three years and the quality of life is excellent. As the vice-president jokingly explains, he can do whatever he wants except ski downhill. And that too because of osteoarthritis of his knees.

Although tremendous strides have been made in the treatment of heart problems, the focus especially in our part of the world has to be on prevention. So this Tihar we need to make sure that during the festival of lights, we stop lighting up cigarettes or bidis. Not overindulging in ladoos and pedas and controlling our consumption even after the festival are good plans. While science came to the rescue of Dick Cheney, we need to avert the disaster all together by leading healthier lives. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

It's in the air

While there is no doubt that Apple popularised and revolutionised the tablet market in April 2010 with the release of its first iPad, pretenders and competitors have been vying for Apple's crown ever since. Samsung, Google, and Nokia-made Android and Windows tablets have been encroaching on Apple's territory, with cheaper, yet capable tablets of their own. With that in mind, how does the California based company's latest iPad incarnation, dubbed the iPad Air, compare with the myriad of tablets available in the market today?

While iPads of old have largely followed the design footsteps of the first iPad, Apple has opted for a noticeably different redesign for its fifth generation iPad. The Air is now substantially thinner and lighter than ever, with Apple doing away with its traditionally chunky tablet design to offer a sleek gadget beautifully integrated with the aesthetically pleasing iOS 7, the company's recently released mobile operating system. The 9.7 inch screen, although the same size as the previous full-sized iPad, still looks as stunning as ever, with Apple's Retina Display screen resolution of 2,048x1,536 pixels leading the tablet market in terms of display resolution and clarity alone, and weighing in at a mere one pound, the device is indeed as light as air.



Powered by Apple's ridiculously fast 64-bit, 1.3 GHz A7 Chip and supported by 1 GB of RAM, the Air is the fastest and best performing mobile Apple device till date which is capable of handling graphic-intensive movies, web pages, and games with ease. As ever, the new iPad's interface is beautifully clean and smooth, with the internal specifications brilliantly complementing the user interface.

The iPad Air is equipped with the same five MP pixel rear camera and 1.2 MP front

camera as its predecessor, which although not market leading, are still competent. The gadget still boasts the iPad's legendary battery life, with a full charge able to deliver approximately 10 hours of tablet usage and Apple's App Store still leads the way in quality of the more than 4,000 apps.

Yes, the iPad Air is ridiculously expensive, with the cheapest 16 GB Wifi model priced at approximately RS 65,000 and yes a finger print scanner (like the iPhone 5S) would have been nice. However, there is no doubt that the latest iPad, slated to release November end, will only cement Apple's position at the top of the tablet food chain. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's verdict: Apple-heads, take out loans if you must, but the latest iPad from the best tablet makers is one you must own.

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MALLIKA ARYAL

(Dis) quiet in Nepalganj

After five years of disappointment, voters are sure who not to vote for

It is Friday afternoon in the dusty town of Nepalganj. Azaan from the local mosque calls for afternoon prayers. A lone statue of late King Birendra stands in the middle of the main thoroughfare holding a tattered Nepali Congress flag and breathing in the dust. There



INTERESTING TIMES

Mallika Aryal

are the usual sounds of early afternoon - the bells of tanga, the horns of minibuses that have made the tanga redundant, and the yells from conductors of Nepalganj-Kathmandu buses. A couple of cars with party

flags wiz past, as if in a hurry to get out of the dust. There is less than three weeks until CA II election. But apart from a few pamphlets of Shiv Sena and RPP-N, all is quiet in Nepalganj.

Local labourers take a quick break for lunch after Friday prayers. As they sit down, another election campaign car passes by. A man is yelling on the microphone in Nepali. The car doesn't stop. We follow the vehicle with our eyes trying hard to understand what is being said. The labourers wait until the sound fades and continue with their lunch.

There's no excitement about CA II election in Nepalganj. The air inside the roadside café is thick with disappointment.

There's a general sense of fatigue and an extremely uncomfortable feeling of hopes being dashed. "We are broken and we are tired," they say. For this group of people from Nepalganj's labour class, whom to vote for in 2008 was a no-brainer. Now they are conflicted and undecided.

In 2008, just like the rest of the country, Nepalganj was ready for the violence to end. They also hoped that their votes would safeguard their rights and they could finally concentrate on improving their lives. They knew that the new (and improved) parties would not tolerate the status quo.

Their demands were not unreasonable: the right to work freely, the freedom to live

happily with their family and neighbours, the opportunity for their children to go to school without any obstacles, the ability to go to the hospital if their loved ones fall sick, and the chance to finally talk about progress.

What they got instead was political bickering, high-level power-play, and many many days of Nepal banda. The people here feel they had no say in what happened after 2008. The situation got much worse for so many families in Nepalganj that they just up and left. Today, it is hard to find homes that don't have a member who migrated to work abroad. Those who remain do not trust that this election is being held sincerely.

Most can't connect with their candidates or their promises because they feel they have heard it all before.

There is also an overwhelming sense that the reasons why CA I was dissolved hasn't really been dealt with. "Just wait, we will get stuck on the same issues after five years and then what?" asks an angry fruit vendor. "By the time we are done writing the constitution it will be 2018 ... and then they will announce round three," jokes another to as if to lighten the mood. The fruit stall goes suddenly quiet as they realise that what is said in jest may actually turn out to be reality.

The political parties did a lot of things wrong in the last five years, but what will cost them the most this coming election is the way they betrayed the trust of sincere, hardworking Nepalis. This is especially true of the new parties because people feel they are still unproven. There are a lot more undecided voters today than in 2008, but what they are not undecided about is that they will not cast the ballot for the party they voted for last time around. Nepalis are resilient and compassionate, but five years of disappointment may be a little hard to forgive so easily. 🇳🇵

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Campaigning in cyberspace

Candidates for the upcoming elections are also campaigning on social media for the first time

BHRIKUTI RAI

A quarter of Nepal's population is now online, nearly three million of them are on Facebook and the mobile penetration rate is now at 65 per cent with 15 per cent of the population accessing the net through their phones.

Even in the last election in 2008, most Nepalis were not yet on the net and hadn't

discovered Facebook. But political parties and younger candidates for this month's elections have made debuts on social networking sites to woo voters.

"Social media has already become an important campaigning tool in this election, giving way to dialogues. But since most of the users are still new to the medium it will be difficult to predict how decisive online campaigning will be," says

constitutional expert and former ambassador, Nilambar Acharya, an avid tweeter himself.

In the run up to the constitution deadline last year there was a spike in postings and the internet became a virtual battleground for netizens, many of them indulging in hate speech. This time the postings are more partisan and an overwhelming number of posts by Facebook and Twitter users ridicule the political parties and their discredited leaders.

One of the most prolific tweeters is Kamal Thapa of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal who has been using social networking sites to push his agenda of a return to monarchy and a Hindu state. On the campaign trail in the dusty outbacks of the Tarai or in the mountains, Thapa is never far from his tablet and smartphone.

"My day begins with posting updates on our campaigns and programs on Facebook and Twitter," Thapa told *Nepali*

Times, while browsing the net. His Facebook followers have jumped to 17,000 in the last two months and complement his sharp oratory and unparalleled crowd-pulling qualities. Thapa adds: "Social media is a great alternative to mainstream media to gauge the mood of the voters, especially the young people."

Thapa's opponents in the federalism debate, including Janajati activists who are for ethnicity-based federalism, have countered with a social media



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BIKRAM RAI

campaign of their own. Thapa and anti-federalist Jana Morcha leader Chitra Bahadur KC have been singled out for vicious vilification on the net.

For now, Maoist second-man Baburam Bhattarai is far ahead of everyone else in terms of followers on Twitter, while Gagan Thapa of the Nepali Congress leads on Facebook. Both have been savvier than other candidates, with measured comments and minimal vilification of opponents and greater audience engagement. Gagan Thapa has also been using YouTube to post campaign songs, speeches, and videos of rallies. New and lesser known candidates like Ujwal Thapa of Bibeksheel Nepali were net savvy even before they entered politics and have been using social networking platforms to drive their alternative



Baburam Bhattarai
@brb_laaldhwoj
Ex-Prime Minister of Nepal. Leader of UCPN (Maoist). Birth: 18/6/1954, Khoplang-4, Gorkha. PhD in Regional Development Planning, 1986, JNU.
baburambhattarai.com

391 TWEETS 25 FOLLOWING 43,303 FOLLOWERS Follow

Tweets



Baburam Bhattarai @brb_laaldhwoj 34m
आज मुगु, हुम्ला, बाजुरा र दैलेखको चुनावी सभामा सहभागी हुन जाँदै।
Expand



Baburam Bhattarai @brb_laaldhwoj 13h
गोरखामा एमाओवादी कमजोर हुनु र अरु पार्टी बलियो हुनु भनेको हाल्ती दुस्लाउनु र बोको मोटाउनु जस्तै हो। यो तथ्यलाई केही मिडियाले लुकाउनु दुखद।
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3,548 TWEETS 955 FOLLOWING 7,258 FOLLOWERS Follow

Tweets



sarita giri @sarita_giri 29 Oct
@chule420 @adhkrishna07 But speaker did not let it go to CA for discussion n voting. Solution is very simple in our view for your question.
View conversation



sarita giri @sarita_giri 29 Oct
@chule420 @adhkrishna07 removing art 64 is our proposal for the guarantee of a constitution. I had registered the amendment in 2066 in CA.



Gagan Thapa
42,446 likes · 19,384 talking about this

Public figure
Official page of Gagan Thapa - CWC Member of Nepal Congress Party & candidate for constituent assembly elections - operated by his secretariat.

42,446 Likes Message

Name	facebook	twitter
Gagan Thapa (@thapagk)	42,446	19,384
Kamal Thapa (@KTnepal)	17,970	6,972
Baburam Bhattarai (brb_laaldhwoj)	2,351	43,281
Sarita Giri (@sarita_giri)	NA	7,247
Ram Sharan Mahat (@ramsmahat)	6,994	3,008
Prakash Dahal	NA	20,099
Pushpa Kamal Dahal	NA	NA

India’s cyber code

India’s Election Commission issued detailed guidelines last week to regulate internet campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other social networking sites, asking candidates to declare their social media accounts and all political parties to pre-certify advertisements before they are posted on websites. Political parties and candidates will now have to account for every penny spent on the use of social media for their campaigns for next year’s general elections in the world’s largest democracy.

The growing number of techno-savvy politicians in India has led to a massive use of social media to reach out to the public. Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi is one of the most intense users with over 2.6 million followers on Twitter. His nearest rival is Shashi Tharoor, who has over 1.8 million followers.

India’s Election Commission requires all political advertisements posted on the Internet to be pre-certified, just like advertisements put out on electronic media, by the state and district-level media monitoring committees.

reform agenda.

However, cyber experts say most political leaders, especially the older ones, don’t yet understand social media. And even those who use it a lot, haven’t learned that many of their propaganda postings can backfire badly. In September, Baburam Bhattarai’s Facebook status and tweet on ‘progressive nationalism’ generated plenty of negative reaction with people criticising the former PM’s double standards on nationalism rhetoric.

“Except for a handful of candidates, no one really seems to have a strategy, not even the bigger parties, to maximise user engagement with an effective campaign,” says Anil Ghimire, a social media specialist and tech blogger. “Social media is all about building credibility of a candidate and it cannot happen overnight or in a month.”

There has also been a plethora of spoof sites on Twitter and Facebook, mainly of Maoist leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his son Prakash, Baburam Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami, who have large followings of their own. A fake Gagan Thapa Facebook page has three times more followers than the official one and Thapa is worried about the possible misuse of such accounts. Says Thapa: “This is the first time we have used social media so extensively and it is very difficult for us to track down such fake pages that have landed me in difficult situation



many times.”

In their attempt to gain visibility online, parties are mudslinging on social media and have realised that the mud flies right back at them. Online party mouthpieces have become a way for candidates to flex their digital muscle and threaten to make this election campaign nastier as it gets into the final weeks.

The Election Commission’s ambiguity over guidelines for social media use in the run up to polls has left plenty of room for misuse of the medium. While guidelines were issued in India last week to regulate social media use for its election next year (*see box*), the same week, Nepal’s election commissioner Ayodhi Prasad Yadav said the EC had no capacity to monitor social media sites.

Nepal is seeing a classic case of social media becoming an echo-chamber leading to ghettoisation of public opinion as users gravitate to sites that they agree with. Anonymous comments spewing racist insults and threats of violence have become common as social media allows the intolerant, political bigots, and outright racists unfettered access.

Says Dharma Adhikari of the Media Foundation, a media policy and research institute: “Online media literacy will be tested as readers and users navigate the information clutter and try to separate facts from propaganda and choose between platforms.”



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Domestic affairs

Madhab Basnet, *Nepal*, 20 October

नेपाल

Pushpa Kamal Dahal may think he is the most important player in Nepali politics, but it is his wife Sita (*pic, right*) who has the final word. Leaders close to the UCPN (M) chairman say he can't do a thing to prevent her influence on the party. Case in point: their daughter Renu's election campaign.

A few days before Dasain, Nanda Kishor Pun went to Dahal's house hoping to get money for door-to-door canvassing and had to watch on as Sita convinced her husband to channel that money into their daughter Renu's campaign fund instead. It was Sita who proposed that Renu run from Kathmandu and Dahal agreed, choosing to face accusations of nepotism instead of the wrath of his wife.



Five months ago, Sita's once-favourite daughter-in-law and her son, Prakash Dahal's, second wife, Srijana Tripathi, poured her frustrations in an interview with a weekly paper, saying Sita turned a blind eye to Prakash's mistakes.

"I stayed with them even after my husband Prakash had eloped with another woman, but Sita never said a bad word about him," says Tripathi. "I could never get any love or appreciation from her, so I finally decided to leave after eight months."

Dahal removed his son from his secretariat and also from the Newa State Committee following the Mt Everest debacle. As always, Sita protested the move, even though her son had opted for it. These days, Prakash goes around with his father as if not a thing happened.

Sita is seven months older than her husband. The two grew up together in Kaski and later in Chitwan after both their parents migrated to the Tarai. Dahal's uncle proposed to Sita's family for the two to get married. Dahal was educated and Sita came from a well-off family, it seemed like a reasonable match. Both sides agreed.

Rajendra Maharjan, writer of *Janayuda ka nayak*, a book on the decade long insurgency, says Sita told him that Dahal and her were like friends and not like a married couple. "We started talking to each other only after a long time. He was shy, I was no better. Each knew the other from childhood, so it was strange when we ended up as husband and wife."

According to close friends, Sita instantly fell out of favour with her new in-laws. Even when his son was head of government, Dahal's father Mukti Prasad chose to stay at his granddaughter's rented apartment in Balkhu and not in Baluwatar. Sita is not on speaking terms with any of her husband's siblings.

Sita never approved of her husband's politics. When the Maoists planned an underground war, she cried and pleaded with Dahal against fighting it out. Which is why, in the early days of the revolution, leaders say the chairman was tortured by the situation at home.

After the insurgency began, Dahal took his wife everywhere he went, almost without fail. Sita came with him to Kathmandu when the first police post was attacked in Rolpa in 1996 and then to India three months later when her husband was sheltered there. Upon her insistence, their two daughters were married to Indian civilians in Lucknow. She even managed to force her elder daughter to come to Jalandhar, Punjab during the insurgency.

In his book, senior UCPN (M) leader Baburam Bhattarai admits that Sita could not stand criticism and used her power to distance her husband from those who crossed her. Even central committee members and their wives were not spared. "He could not discourage her from breaking protocol and saying whatever she wanted to other fully committed and responsible comrades," Bhattarai notes in the same book. Later Bhattarai himself would suggest that Sita be made a part of the central committee.

"She is not a political person but a housewife," says a Maoist central committee member who has known the Dahals for 19 years.

During the course of this investigation, *Nepal* tried to get in touch with Sita Dahal but to no avail. Her husband's secretary defend her by saying: "She was a patient woman who had a huge role to play in the success of the civil war."

In the driver's seat

Laxman Humagain in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 27 October

हिमाल

I have been driving a car for a private company now for 15 years. Many like me end up doing this job because they come from low income families or couldn't get a higher education. Many are from the districts adjacent to Kathmandu and have got their jobs through connections.



Drivers have no illusions about their job and are aware of what is expected of them: taking the sir or madam to their destinations, parking the vehicle safely, and making sure they are visible and ready when they come out.

The most sought after job for drivers is at diplomatic offices. Drivers of cars with blue CD plates feel they are a different class by themselves and do not hobnob with us. Drivers of government vehicles are more chatty and usually complain about working conditions. But by and large, all drivers grumble about low salary, long working hours, lack of overtime, holidays

or meal allowances. One driver of a school principal says he has to open the door for him and has to stand outside the car while he is in a meeting.

I once saw a new driver with a vehicle I had seen often. He said the old driver had quit. "I am also leaving soon to drive a bus," he said. The drivers thought because the employer was a famous, respected person who had written books, they would be treated well. Apparently the

public persona of a person does not tally with the way they treat and value their drivers.

But not all employers are like that, there are many who treat their drivers with respect. One boss runs his company with his son and daughter and they helped with the education of the driver's son and helped send him abroad. When it's late, they usually drive the car themselves. Another boss got a driver's wife a job and helped them financially to build a house on the Ring Road.

If employers didn't take their drivers for granted and looked after them, it may actually make their lives smoother.

Sleep to success

Binita Dahal, *Setopati*, 26 October

सेतोपाटी

They say success is 90 per cent hard work and 10 per cent luck. But in Prajwal Parajuly's case, the opposite applies. Author of the successful short story collection, *The Gurkha's Daughter*, Parajuly admits he is too lazy to be working 90 per cent of the time. "I have to sleep a lot. It is only when I get tired of sleeping that I sit down to write," he says. "But not without eating, I have to have some chocolates."

Even before his book was published, the 29-year-old was already a well-known name in the Indian literary circuit. Besides signing a deal with British publishing house Quercus for a collection of short stories, the writer was also asked to submit a novel, *The Land Where I Flee*, which will be released this December.

In each of the eight stories in *The Gurkha's Daughter*, Parajuly carefully and intricately weaves family ties and lays bare a microcosm of human and social interactions. One would imagine the author an avid introspect in his personal interactions, but the writer demurs. "I am not a very social person. The things I have written in my book are things

that I know."

Parajuly admits he was never a good student. He recalls getting a score of 1 out of 100 in his Maths examination and was embarrassed when the teacher told him in front of his entire class that he had actually gotten a 0.9.

To make up for his failure in class, Parajuly started sending his writings to a local paper in his hometown of Sikkim. Once his writing got published, he



felt much better about himself. "I learnt that it was important to follow one's passion rather than choose a course on a whim," he says of his decision to study Science during his ICSE.

A communications major, Parajuly worked for three years in the advertising department of an American publication house. But when he felt he was whiling his time at the office, he resigned and

went on a tour of India with a friend. When the trip came to an end, instead of returning home, out of fear of facing questions from his parents on his decision to quit his job, he went to Manali. It was there that he wrote his story *The Immigrants* which would later fetch him a book deal.

While preparing for his admissions interview for a creative writing course at Oxford University, Parajuly came to know about the London book fair. At the fair he met a literary agent named Susan and handed her a copy of *The Immigrants*. Few days later when Susan wrote saying she liked the story and wanted more, Parajuly was in a state of disbelief. He sent more and soon the deal with Quercus was finalised.

When asked how he became a writer he says, "I had nothing to do after I quit my American job. Hence, I wrote to legitimise my existence."

After the success of his book, Parajuly had to travel frequently. He spent most of last year at airport transits and says he has missed out on his much beloved sleep. This year, too, the author will be missing sleep as he will be busy jet-setting and promoting his new novel *The Land Where I Flee*.



Dahal: "And where's the toilet? There? Does it have a helipad nearby?"

कान्तिपुर

Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 31 October



Aide: "Today, Comrade will have tea in Chitwan, breakfast in Bajhang, lunch in Lamjung, snacks in Khotang, and dinner in Dolpa."

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट

Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 31 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“If the Maoists help us during the polls, we can help them afterwards.”

UML Chairman Jhalnath Khanal, *Naya Patrika*, 31 October



FLYING THE FLAG: Indian campaign jeeps in Chandranigahapur openly flout EC rules (left). Shopkeeper Madan Pradhan (below) hasn't decided who to vote for.



PICS: INDRA SHRESTHA

Campaigning at harvest time

In hills and plains of central Nepal, people are too busy to get excited about elections

SUBHAS DEVKOTA in SINDHULI

On a trip this week from Kathmandu to Sindhuli and Makwanpur, Nepal's countryside looks busy with two unrelated activities: the people are busy harvesting paddy and the politicians are busy campaigning.

The two couldn't be bothered about each other. The rice harvest has been plentiful because of a healthy monsoon and there aren't enough hours in the day for farmers to work the golden terraces. Meanwhile, candidates roar past in jeep convoys festooned with party flags shouting slogans. The political cadre don't look at the villagers and the farmers hardly look up from their task.

Party leaders and cadre who used to have lots of free time during the festival season are all very busy this year. There is the door-to-door campaigning to organise, mass meetings to fix, and not to mention being alert of CPN-M cadre out to disrupt their activities. Aside from that, cadre also have to watch out for hostile locals who may ask their candidates nasty questions in front of tv cameras.

Even though rural Nepal is too busy to be excited about elections and many see the same candidates making the same promises, they are hoping against hope that their vote will end the political deadlock that has bedeviled the country for five years.

Badri Neupane of the small

Chure Bhabar Party is flanked by three dozen cadre campaigning in the plains of Sarlahi. His party was set up to counter the rise of the Madhesi parties south of the East-West Highway and he sees massive support. "I see a lot of enthusiasm for the party," Neupane says.

Indeed, unlike the hinterland, in the district capitals and the bazar towns along the highways, the talk of elections and candidates dominate the public sphere in tea shops and in the shade of pipal trees. Even though people may not know the names of candidates, there is brand recognition of electoral symbols of the main parties. "I



think it is too early to tell which party will win, although there is a lot of speculation," says Madan Pradhan, who runs a small shop in Bardibas.

Most voters *Nepali Times* spoke to said they hadn't yet made up their minds. They return the namastes and smile at the campaigning candidates, but the people say that doesn't mean they support them.

However, the candidates have taken the greetings to mean they are more popular than rivals. Mohan Baral of the NC contesting Sindhuli 2, for example, says the UML and the UCPN (M) candidates there are way behind and he is confident of winning.

In interviews, voters say their

criteria for choosing candidates is performance, personality, and ethnicity. The national issues in the party manifestos seem to have little bearing in the way most will vote. Sambhu Shrestha of the UCPN (M) is competing with UML leader Jhala Nath Khanal in Sarlahi 1 and appears confident he will win because he is a local, whereas Khanal is a 'tourist' candidate. Khanal, however, has another 'assured' seat in Ilam.

Despite attacks by CPN-M making headlines in the Kathmandu papers, there appeared to be little to indicate their presence in the central hill and Tarai districts this week. All indications are that the elections will go ahead relatively peacefully, albeit with lower turnout than 2008. ■

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Please try again later

Just like traffic rules, Nepal's election code of conduct is just a suggestion. It would be fantastic if you followed it, but if you don't that's all right too. For instance the Election Commissars have a rule about the use of helicopters and have decreed choppers out of bounds in 45 districts. But candidates are whizzing about, with Chairman Awesome even making a 10 minute air-hop from Kathmandu to Kavre the other day. The reason is that everywhere the Cash leaders go to deliver campaign speeches, the Dash is sure to be declaring impromptu bunds. The modus operandi is to chop down trees and block roads just like in the war days and at this rate we are going to lose all our forests. Just in order to save Nepal's remaining jungles in the next three weeks, the EC should relax its rule on helicopter use.



The helicopter rule, however, doesn't seem to apply to members of the Interim Election Council and we saw KRR over the holidays treating the Army's chopper as his own. The Home Minister seems to think his job description is to fly home to Palpa every chance he gets, especially since he wasn't allowed to fly to NYC. Seeing the others do it, acting



CJ Damodar decided to also 'request' the Army's Ecuriel for a pilgrimage to Muktinath over Dasain. He had a night stop at the Army's mountaineering training base in Jomsom and the next morning Justice Damodar also took a flyby of the holy lake that bears his name: Damodar Kunda in Mustang. The Army was only too happy to oblige and sent the government a bill for half a million roops, which taxpayers like you and me will ultimately foot.



The comrades have blood on their hands, but top corruption watchdog Loktantrick Man Sing had blood all over his feet when he choppered out to Manakamana Temple over the festival. The photograph of a police officer washing



The Man's feet went viral on social media ridiculing this royalist-turned-commie-turned-godman. Perhaps to escape further scrutiny, the Tantrick has suddenly upped and gone off to China on an extended two-week visit where he is expected to have tete-e-tetes with top CPC leaders who haven't yet deigned to meet Nepali disciples of Mr Zedong. As an acolyte of Autopilot Baba of the South, LMSK's enigmatic trip to the North is raising eyebrows. And as Chinese contractors like CAMC and SinoHydro come under the CIAA scanner, is this an effort to persuade The Man not to stand in the way?



Other junkets in the past week include the one organised by the Unification Church through its

local representative, the Family Party, which took Nepal's top editors and publishers (including Sishi Gamala but excluding the Ass) to Thailand on an all-expenses-paid holiday. Regular Ass readers will remember how the Familiar Party paid its guy to be made minister in the last BRB gubberment with a Moonie Minister in GoN. We now have two kinds of loonies in Nepal: Moonie disciples from the south and the Juchhe disciples from the north of the peninsula.



Nepal's present and former rulers are a bit crestfallen to hear that they haven't made it to the list of 35 friendly governments that the American National Security Agency spied on since 2002, intercepting emails and tapping mobile phones. Does the CIA not think our leaders are important enough for them? The Donkey has been told by unusually reliable sources at Langley that the Americans did try to tap into the mobile phones of Brave Lion, Makunay, and even Awesome over the years, but

they kept getting this recorded message: "Sorry, the network is busy. Please try again later." So the NSA just gave up trying.



The story of the week was PKD threatening at a campaign stop to go to the gallows if found guilty of war crimes. He must have expected everyone to say, "No, we won't let you," but the crowd cheered. Awesome didn't look too pleased. He is also not so pleased about the thin crowds at the campaign stops that he does make it to by chopper. On Tuesday, he had to cancel a speech at his old constituency in Kirtipur because locals were stocking up with missiles to throw at his cavalcade. PKD must also be demoralised by the news that Bina Magar's ex has decided to be the campaign manager for Padam Kunwar, the guy who slapped him in the face last year and is now standing as an independent from Kirtipur against him.



Quote of the Week from BRB: "Unless we get a two-thirds majority in the election, we will not allow the constitution to be written."

Ass



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