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UPHILL TASK

As the election euphoria evaporates, it is down to realpolitik again. The first test of whether the victorious NC and UML have turned a new leaf will be if they resort to their dog-eat-dog rivalry in the formation of a new government in the coming weeks. It also remains to be seen how the Deuba and Koirala factions of the NC work out a power-sharing deal and who becomes prime minister. If the past is any indication, they will be fighting tooth-and-nail. So far, the UML is insisting on a new president, say Subhas Nemwang, in return for letting the NC lead the government. In all this, all Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal could do was head off to the Election Commission on Wednesday with 13 losing parties to demand vote recounts (pictured).

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BIKRAM RAI

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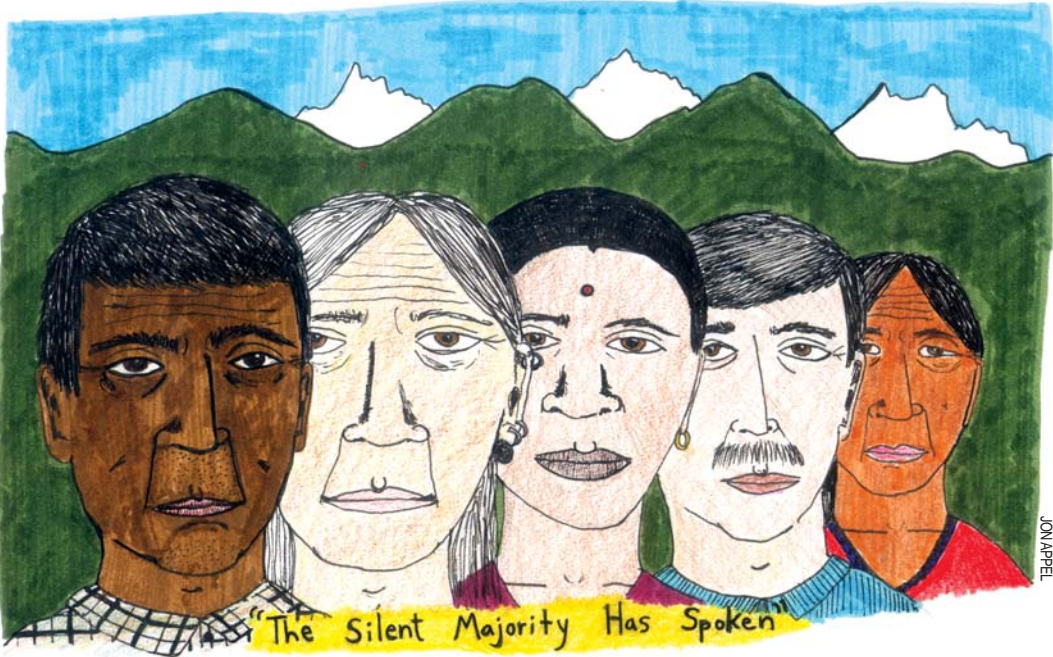
BACK TO THE CENTRE

Nepal’s silent majority has spoken, it has rejected violence and given moderate centrist parties one more chance to prove themselves. In their collective wisdom the voters have also thrown out many of the liars and thieves, electing a crop of fresh and untested young leaders. The high turnout was a strong message to the boycotting CPN-M and support for the traditional moderate parties was an unequivocal rejection of the politics of ethnicity of the non-performing UCPN (M) and Madhesi parties.

The people have also rejected radicals from both the left and right. While the monarchist RPP-N has accepted the verdict, taking solace in a strong showing in the PR ballot, the Maoists have once more proven their true colours by crying foul and resorting to threats and blackmail. In 2008, the people voted for the Maoists but not exactly for the Maoist agenda: it was a vote for peace, a new constitution, and change. But when the people found out that the comrades were even more greedy and corrupt than the NC and UML, they threw them out.

The writing was on the wall, as many public opinion surveys in the past five years by this newspaper and others had shown (*see page 15-16*). The people are interested more in bread and butter issues like health, education, jobs, and roads. They want accountable leaders with integrity, they are less than enthusiastic about secularism, and they think federalism based on single ethnicity is a bad idea. Even people from the indigenous communities and the Tarai felt that way, but the Maoists and the Madhesi parties went ahead and made those issues their main plank showing just how out of touch they were.

So, the age of violence in politics is over. This is the



The centrist Nepali Congress and UML shouldn’t see this as a winner-takes-all mandate

age of persuasion and performance. The people don’t want to be treated as fools and fed empty slogans, they are alert and know exactly what is going on, who is lying and stealing.

In their euphoria of victory and overblown vermilion rallies, the NC and UML may think that the table has turned and they can go back to their winner-takes-all behaviour. The people remember only too well the political paralysis of the NC-UML rivalry in the 1990s. Some of the more spectacularly corrupt and opportunist leaders from that era, unfortunately, have somehow managed to get themselves elected this

time too. The first test of whether the NC and UML have turned a new leaf will be if they resort to their dog-eat-dog rivalry in the formation of a new government in the coming weeks. It also remains to be seen how the Deuba and Koirala factions of the NC work out a power-sharing deal. If the past is any indication, they will be fighting tooth-and-nail very soon.

The CA’s mandate is to write a new constitution within 12 months and behave as a parliament for the next five years. The election results do not mean we can go back to an exclusivist, centralised polity. If the past five years have taught us anything it is that we must decentralise decision-making and devolve political power to the regions.

Call it federalism if you want, but it means reviving the process of community-led development by elected local representatives that had begun in the mid-1990s. Only this time we need to build in inclusion of the disenfranchised and marginalised into local elected structures. For that, the first order of business is to conduct local elections. Nepal needs to get its politics back on track so investment-led growth and infrastructure can create jobs, just like it had started happening in the early 1990s.

The first Constituent Assembly was deadlocked over the boundaries and names of federal provinces. In a country with 126 ethnic groups and 123 languages, this has to be done with care, redressing historical exclusion of the underserved while preserving and strengthening national unity. Only devolution of political power out of Kathmandu will guarantee equity and balanced development.

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

MAKING IT COUNT

Congratulations to all Nepalis for making the elections a success ('Making it count', #682). We hope our votes will make a difference this time by bringing out a new constitution on time. Although we have always had to choose between the lesser of two crooks, we have shown that we cannot be fooled twice by the empty slogans of loaded leaders. The Nepali Congress and UML have been given a big opportunity to finally get their act together. If they disappoint us and fail us again, the election booths will be empty next time. Please don't let our votes go to waste.

Nabin Shakya

NEXT STEP

I believe CA II will get the job done, not because of lack of an alternative, but more due to Pushpa Kamal Dahal's inability to pull off some legislative stunts with his clowns ('The next step', Editorial, #682). Now that the carnival is over for Dahal et al, it's time to get the nation back on track. Seventy per cent voter turnout, Maoists out, NC/UML back in town, let's get that constitution out the door.

AP

- Now that the vote counting is almost over and the Maoists are no longer the biggest party, in addition to writing a new constitution, can we also talk about setting up a truth and reconciliation commission? Surely

Nepal cannot afford to step into the future without laying the ghosts of its past to rest. None of us ever want a war of retribution. Therefore we need to keep reminding the new 601-member CA that the peace process is not complete yet.

Janu Shrestha

- I'm sure students of European history, specifically of the French revolution, are having a bit of déjà vu looking at Nepali politics right now. The routing and execution of the absolutist royal couple, then the reign of terror and then course correction(s), vacillating between the various renditions of the French Republic (1 through 5) interspersed with the Napoleonic empires with elements of the 'ancien régime'. The canvas may look different, but the elements are somewhat similar.

Jeevs

SORE LOSERS

Thank you Trishna Rana for writing what needs to be written about a party that needs no introduction when it comes to 'crying foul' if it loses and 'people's verdict' when it wins ('Sore losers', #682). Whatever happened to the claim that Dahal, the mastermind, was not only the leader of the largest party (now former), but also the responsible guardian of Nepal and its people? I guess we saw how statesmanlike he really is. Dahal's days of lying and cheating are finally over, he can go back to Paris Danda and redraw

his next strategy. But he will never have the trust of the Nepali people again.

'Luv Nepal'

- This is a very well written article, but I do not agree with the writer when she says the Maoists were given a "clean chit" in the 2008 elections even though there were several accusations of fraud. If they were given a free pass, they did not do anything wrong and you cannot blame them for something that has not been proven. Otherwise, it wouldn't be any different from the Maoists crying foul now.

B

- I am glad Dahal lost from my Kathmandu-10 constituency and his party is trailing far behind in the vote count. Having said that, however, I am sure the UCPN (M) is going to create a huge ruckus for the next month or so, trying to arm twist and bully its way into power. We Nepalis will once again be the losers.

Lily

- The grapes are very sour for Mr Dahal. He is a big time loose character. We shouldn't have expected anything different from a mass murderer.

Kalanki

- Mohan Baidya's breakaway faction is now looking to participate in the new CA through an amendment in the constitution. Is this some kind of joke?

Are there no rules and procedures in this country? The Maoists can do whatever and whenever they please? Baidya and his obdurate men were given enough time and space to partake in elections. Nepalis have had enough drama from both the cash and the dash.

BRK

- Us Nepalis need to be more moderate in our political discourse. We turn men into heroes or zeroes and fail to see shades of grey. In 2008, people were completely blinded by the Maoist euphoria. We treated Bhattarai and Dahal like gods, like they had the answers to all our problems. If we had been slightly more prudent back then, we wouldn't be witch hunting the Maobadis right now.

Gaya

- Perhaps someone on *Nepali Times'* editorial team can explain to me why despite so much apathy, people were desperate for change? Seems like a contradiction. According to PR numbers, the Maoists have not done too badly. I am still not able to put my finger on the reason for such a high turnout.

AP

ANOTHER CHANCE

The winning candidates can continue holding victory rallies, dancing and prancing, circling constituencies in their vehicles and bikes, and adorning

themselves with tika, khadas, and kilos worth of marigold garlands ('Another chance', Anurag Acharya, #682). They shouldn't let anyone or anything deter them from soaking up all the glory because this is their moment to gloat. But the euphoria won't last forever. Winning an election is nothing compared to what is in store for them in the coming days. Will the future CA members and parties live up to their promises? Nepalis will be watching their every move this time.

EGR

- The UML in top position, the UCPN (M) and Madhesi parties getting wiped out. The results seem extremely suspicious and smell of massive fraud. I am willing to accept the NC's numbers, but UML registering such massive wins, are you kidding me?

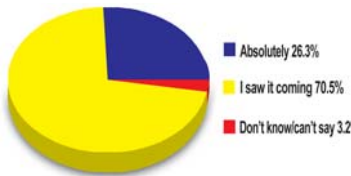
Krishna



Weekly Internet Poll # 683

Q. Are you surprised by the results of the direct poll?

Total votes: 803



Weekly Internet Poll # 684. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Are the current election results an indication that Nepali people are against the Maoists' ethno-federalism agenda?





BIKRAM RAI

The UCPN (M) has reacted badly to its humiliating defeat in the elections. As results started coming in last week, the Maoist leadership concluded at a meeting conducted at 3am that the polls were rigged and that they were victims of an international and internal conspiracy to defeat them.



INSIDE OUT

Muma Ram Khanal

The immature reaction demonstrated that the Maoist leadership had become unhinged and was behaving in a politically unbalanced way. On the evening of 19 November, Pushpa Kamal Dahal had himself asserted that the polls had been free, fair, and independent. It had been Dahal's proposal in the Hetauda Plenum to have the Chief Justice lead an election government. Although this was opposed by civil society, professional organisations, and the Bar Association, the elections took place because there was no other alternative. Initially, the Maoists' reaction could be blamed on the shock of defeat. But the party is still behaving in an irrational way. By playing bad losers, the Maoists have shown themselves to be anti-political, irresponsible, and still prone to making threats about going back to war. This has demolished what little credibility the party had earned in the past two years. The Maoists have no alternative but to accept the election results, not doing so would lead to a further dangerous split. The Baburam Bhattarai faction of the party doesn't look like it will abandon the Constituent

Assembly and Dahal may be driven into Mohan Baidya's fold. The party would be better advised to analyse the reasons for the defeat and to take steps to correct some of them. A post-mortem of the election result shows that there were many reasons why the UCPN (M) had to bear such an undignified loss:

1. The people's abhorrence of political violence and the behaviour of Maoist cadre in intimidating and extorting ordinary people.
2. Popular rejection of ethnic politics and the Maoist support for federalism based on single ethnicity. The Maoists were blamed for planting the seeds of extreme ethnic politics both by backing ethnicity-based federalism and Madhes autonomy. The election results showed that this agenda was rejected by many Janajatis and Madhesis themselves.
3. It is true that secularism, federal republicanism, and the formation of a Constituent Assembly were mainly Maoist agendas which won support of the people in 2008 because voters thought that these would bring peace. But after seeing the arrogance of the Maoists in power, voters figured out that the promises were just slogans.
4. The Maoists were blamed for the failure in writing the constitution and the popular perception was that they just wanted to remain in power.
5. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, in particular, was blamed for being obsessed with returning to power and not caring too much about constitution-drafting.

6. Dahal became the Maoists' main liability during the polls because of his contradictory statements, public lies, and the perception that he lacked integrity.

Post-mortem of a defeat

The Maoists have no one to blame but themselves for the rout in elections

7. The CPN-M took away 90 seats and split the vote bank. Many CPN-M cadres actively campaigned against the parent party candidates. This fact alone was enough to cost the Maoists the election.
8. Even after the split, the real revolutionaries within the UCPN (M) became disenchanted with the leadership and were unhappy with the party embracing opportunistic newcomers.
9. The luxurious neo-capitalist lifestyle of the leadership (particularly Dahal and Hisila

Yami) made the party unpopular with the cadres and the masses.

10. Maoist supporters and ex-fighters who had sacrificed all, had been wounded or suffered during the conflict asked: "What was it all for?" They had seen the party leadership siphon off allowances and compensation meant for them and the elections provided the perfect opportunity to exact revenge.

Muma Ram Khanal was a central member of the Maoist party during the conflict. His column, Inside Out, appears fortnightly in Nepali Times.

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Delhi double

The Hemraj-Arushi murder case holds serious implications for Nepali society

NEW DELHI -- The case of the double murder of 45-year-old Hemraj Banjade (the house-help from Arghakhanchi district in Nepal working for a family in the Delhi suburb of Noida) and 14-year Arushi Talwar was finally decided by a ‘special CBI court’ in the Indian capital on 25 November. The gavel came down against Rajesh and Nupur Talwar, the dentist couple parents of Arushi. The husband committed the double-murder, with the wife as accessory to cover-up.

The case has polarised society here between those who firmly believe that the Talwar couple was innocent and others maintaining this as a case of poor,

powerless, and foriegn domestic helpers being made easy targets of violence. A trail of incompetent investigations of the UP Police and CBI marked the five-year-passage of this case, with the press following it with great interest due to its sexual intrigue.

The body of Arushi was found in her bedroom the morning of 16 May 2008. The immediate suspect was Hemraj, but then his decomposed body was discovered in the terrace upstairs the next day. Other Nepali migrant workers were dragged into the net of investigations and subjected to narco tests, ‘brain mappings’, psychological evaluations, and polygraph

tests. The workers included Krishna, Rajkumar, and Vijay, who were later released, but the stigma remained so strong that they are all said to have left for Nepal.

The Talwars were sentenced and they apparently plan to submit an appeal to the Allahabad High Court and from there, if required, to the Supreme Court. As the case seems set to proceed through the Indian judicial system, the issues and implications for Nepali society need to be considered back in Kathmandu. At the basic level, it is an agonising testament to the failure of politics to guide the economy that Nepali citizens of plains, hills, and mountains continue to have to go to India (Himachal’s ‘kalapahad’ apple orchards, Punjab’s wheat fields, Bombay bylanes, etc) as they have historically, for the sake of feeding their families.

While the Uttarkhandis (from Kumaon and Garhwal) were roughly at the same place and status in the plains as Nepalis some decades ago. They have since moved up the social ladder. The Nepalis,

on the other hand, are competing with others communities who have entered the occupations of domestic help such as chowkidari, restaurant labour, workshop helpers, and agricultural work.


The various marginalised groups within India (adivasis, Dalits, and others) and Bangladeshis are in competition. The Indian citizens of Nepali origin are faced with some of the same, as well as other challenges.

Several criminal cases over recent years have hurt the image of Nepali migrant workers in India and the name of the ‘bahadur’ has been sullied. The extraordinary media interest in such cases, especially where the urban middle and upper classes are victims, has had the effect of negative labeling. It is very likely that the innocent poor have been made scapegoats in many instances, with their salary scales impacted coorespondingly.

The political instability in Nepal has affected employment and this must be reversed so our citizens won’t have to go elsewhere for work, a move that disrupts family life, weakens the home economy, and creates a cumulative burden of national psychological distress.

The media interest on ‘manpower’ issues related to the high-visibility labour migration of Nepalis to Malaysia and the Gulf diverts attention from the very poorest undocumented workers in India. There are few studies of Nepali workers in India and matters related to their social status and security are ignored with fatalistic negligence. The government in Kathmandu has not even placed an ambassador at Barakhamba Road for more than two years.

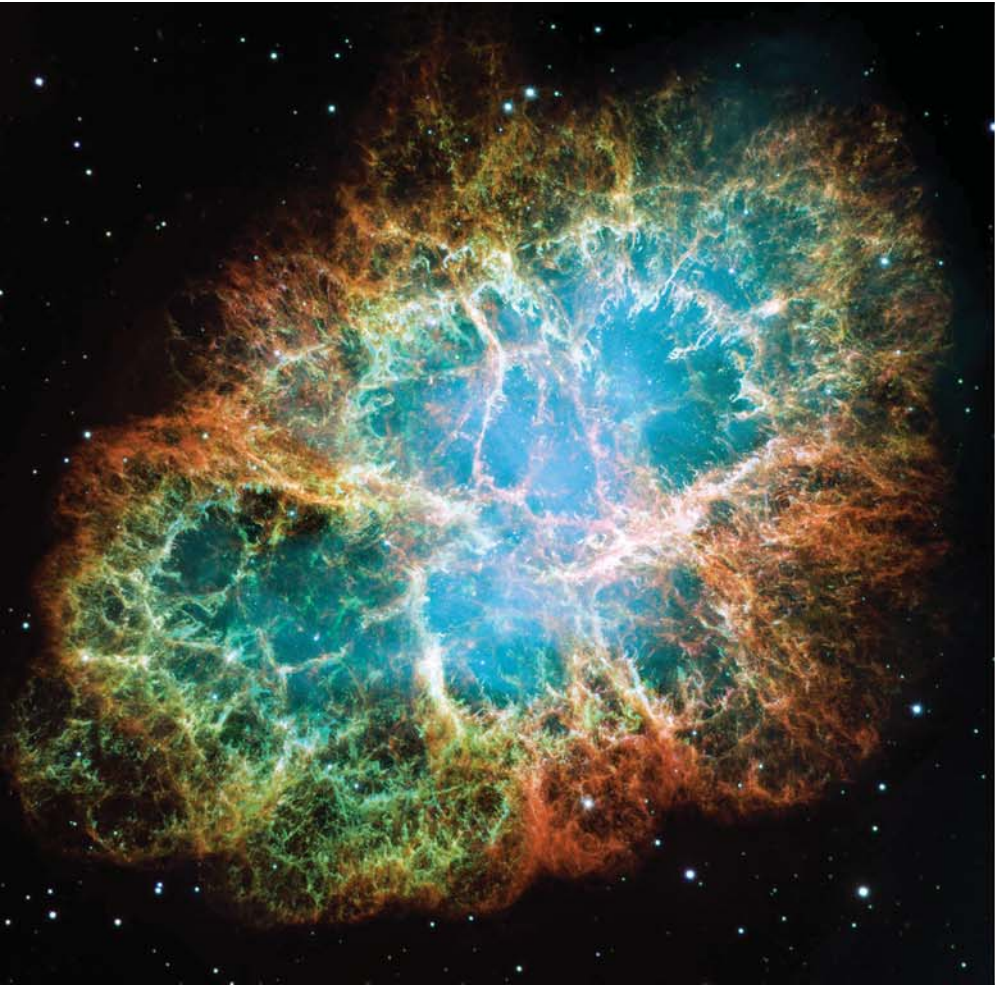
As Nepal transitions towards more representative and accountable government, the single focus and goal for policy-makers and politicians should be on generating mass-level dignified employment within Nepal.

Hemraj Banjade was forced to serve a society and economy far away from his own. When the departure of Nepali citizens for work in India ends, it will indicate that Nepal is about to fulfil its historical promise as a nation-state to its citizens. 

Kanak Mani Dixit

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Himal Southasian January 1997: ‘Lowly labour in the lowlands.’



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Here's to losing

Too long have Nepalis followed the fortunes of overpaid, overweening Indian cricketers. Like our interest in Salman's puffed pecs and Kareena's pencil pelvis, this feckless fandom does not square with our natural suspicion of Big Brother. The result is an adulteration of the incandescent purity of sporting emotion. When India wins, we rejoice, but with a hint of guilt. When India loses, we snort and mutter about their ghee knees and flick the channel to Salman and Kareena.

If only we had a team to support. Nepalis never got around to saying this until they had one. Football was and still is so dominant that we almost never noticed just how talented our young cricketers were. We knew they were making waves in the under-15/17/19/21s, but by the time the big league came around, our batsmen and bowlers were more likely to be washing dishes in Amrika than training for the next tournament.

And then the Paras Khadkas of the youth teams began coming

through into the men's team. Nepali cricket began to grow up. Suddenly, we were winning game after game after game. Suddenly, we had a real team. And when we overcame a sluggish start to win the Division Three League earlier this year, we were in with a real chance at World Cup glory.

On the day Tendulkar finally left the building, then, Nepal thrashed Denmark to kick off its campaign at the ICC World T20 Qualifiers. It was symbolic. Soon enough, we were one win away from a place in the 2014 T20 World Cup and for once, I felt envious of the Nepalis waving flags in the Abu Dhabi stadium. I couldn't spot a single Hong Kong supporter in the stands, and perhaps it wasn't surprising. Who would support a yellow man's team of brown men led by a white man?

It was a humdinger of a match, as they say. Hong Kong's captain bust a finger wicket keeping in the 18th over, Nepal's captain committed hara-kiri in the 19th over, and Nepal blasted 13 off the last 6 balls to get over the

line, just. It was the biggest day in our sporting history.

In 1996, rank outsiders Sri Lanka beat Australia to win the ODI World Cup. By 2011, they were expected to win. Yesterday's Sri Lanka is today's Bangladesh. And today's Bangladesh, quite possibly, is tomorrow's Nepal. We will go to the T20 World Cup and we will most likely lose all our matches before being unceremoniously ejected from the high table. It will be gutting, but we will be screaming for our own tribe. We will love them and hate them, but all will be forgiven until the next time.

I want to feel the pain of being a Bangladesh fan. I want to feel the pain of losing. I want to anticipate that solitary win that will make it all worthwhile, that shaft of sunlight piercing the leaden clouds. I don't imagine that cricket is the saving of Nepal, no. As Shehan Karunatilaka says, "Despite the fairytale of '96, it wasn't the cricket that ended our civil war. It was the tanks and the fighter planes." Yes, sport can bring the nation together, but after the streamers are taken down and the balloons lose their shape and drift about the legs of empty chairs like the wrinkled breasts of abandoned women, we will know there is work to be done, elsewhere. Cricket won't write our constitution for us, but it will make reality a little more tolerable. Or tangle: the multi-ethnic nature of our squad may make it easier for Nepalis to feel a kinship across barriers that have been accentuated of late.

Sport fulfils a function similar to art. It makes us feel bigger and better about ourselves, it helps us transcend the limits of individuality and identity. In that, it can be a thing of beauty. So here's to the big league. Here's to a decade of being thrashed by the big boys and brought down to earth by fellow minnows who we thought we'd long surpassed. Here's to losing, and losing, and losing, as long as we win, once in a blue moon.

Nepali Kukur

nepalitimes.com
Read longer version of this blog

BIZ BRIEFS

Handy goods

The 11th Handicrafts Trade Fair organised by the Federation of Handicraft Association (FHAN) of Nepal kicked off on Wednesday. The five-day fair is being held at Bhrikuti Mandap and features a wide range of products including pashmina, woollen goods, leather products, and silver accessories. Products from China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are also up for grabs.



"The handicrafts industry is a significant contributor to the country's economy," said Rabindra Kumar Shakya, the vice-chairman of FHAN at the inaugural ceremony. "With the right kind of promotion, the industry can develop more," he added. The event is being supported by the Commerce and Supply Ministry, Trade and Export Promotion Centre, Micro Enterprises Development Program, FedEx, and Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries.



Eye walk

Standard Chartered Bank organised a fund-raising walkathon on Saturday which saw 400 people march from Naya Baneshwor to Lajimpat. The money raised from the event will go towards the bank's 'Seeing is Believing' initiative which works towards improving eye care services.

New face

Veteran actor Rajesh Hamal has been appointed the brand ambassador for Dabur Chawanprash, a health product from Dabur Nepal. Speaking at a function last week the superstar said: "My mother used to give me Chawanprash since my childhood."



Indexfurniture Discounted sleep

Index Furniture has started a new campaign 'Wedding Collection' under which customers can now get 10 per cent discounts on purchase of bedroom sets. The campaign which began this week lasts until 1 February.

Hot vacances

Qatar Airways has released its newest holidays brochure which features a collection of around 100 packages to destinations such as Maldives, Thailand, Italy, France, Kenya, Australia, and many more. The offers are available until April 2014.



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Little Tibets

As the number of refugees decline, Tibetan schools in Kathmandu replace them with Nepali students

TOUGH TIMES: Children of UKG at Atisha Primary School in Ekantakuna which is struggling to survive because it is running out of students.



PICS: TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

It is morning assembly at Atisha Primary School in Ekantakuna and the students are chanting a Tibetan Buddhist prayer and singing two national anthems. The principal speaks to the children in Tibetan.

But the school, opened in 1984 for the children of Tibetan refugees and one of four in the Valley, is running out of students. There are now only 54 students from Kindergarten to Grade 5, the lowest number enrolled in a school that used to have 130 children.

“Each year we have more than two students who leave because their family has migrated to either the US or Canada,” explains principal Buche, who thinks the school’s days are numbered.



In the 1990s there were still 20,000 Tibetan refugees living in Nepal and today the population has dwindled to 13,000. Limited rights and lack of legal recognition in the host country have sent many looking for a better life abroad.

Although there is no strict code that bars non-Tibetan students into the Ekantakuna school, students have been

deterred by the compulsory Tibetan language. This may have to change if the school wants to attract non-Tibetan students in order to survive, Buche admits. Currently more than half the students in Tibetan schools are sponsored by benefactors.

The school was set up so refugee children could learn in their own language, and earlier that was the reason parents sent their children here. But now, even Tibetan parents prefer the private school system which has better English instruction.

“Most children find Tibetan difficult and force parents to send them to private English schools,” says Norbu Tsering, headmaster of Namgyal Higher Secondary School in Sundarimal which is the only Tibetan school offering 10+2 and has 450 students. It is seeing a decrease in

enrolment even though it was number four in a college ranking by *Himal Khabarpatrika* last year.

Tibetan schools would have been much worse off had it not been for the influx of students from Nepal’s northern districts whose mother tongue is Tibetan. In fact, the Srongsens Bhrikuti Boarding School in Boudha has reported an increase in enrolment with half its 750 students Nepalis.

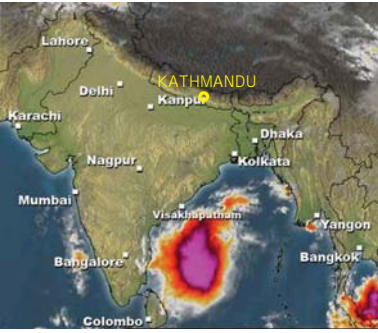
“It is easier for these students to fit in because they share the same culture as Tibetans and they get quality education at half the price of private schools,” explains Tsering. 🇳🇵

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Picture gallery and video



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With the driest month coming to an end, Kathmandu may receive a light rain shower in the first week of December. Although the mornings in Kathmandu will be clear, expect light clouds filtering the sunlight throughout the afternoon until next week. Maximum temperature will hover around 19 celsius and minimum at 11. The temperature will start dipping in the next few weeks due to high pressure.

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AYESHA SHAKYA

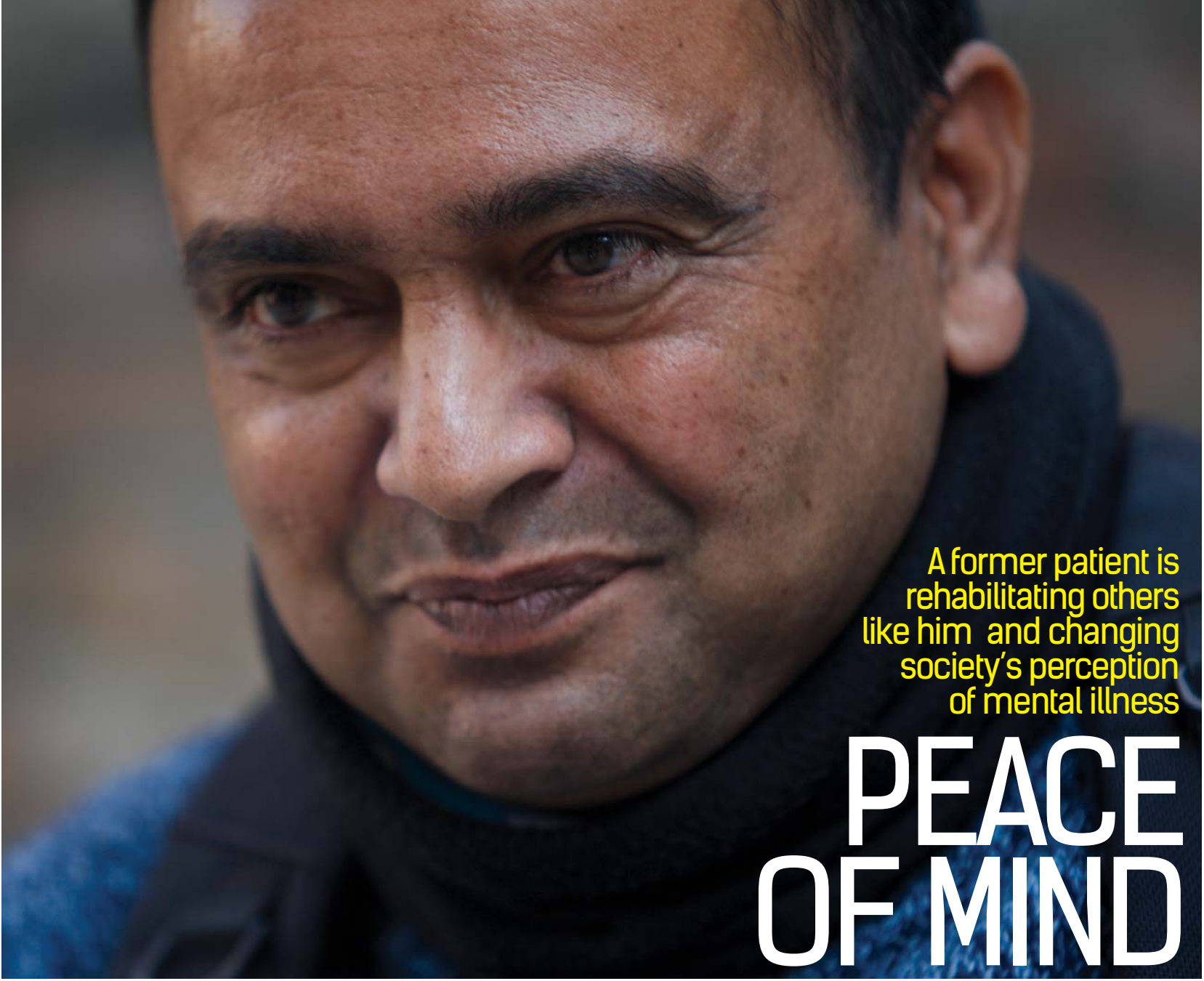
Matrika Devkota was 15 when he first started suffering from symptoms of depression: long periods of sadness, fatigue, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating at school. He visited doctors in his hometown of Gorkha, but they were dismissive and told him that he was just going through a normal teenage ‘phase’. “It was the darkest time of my life. I knew I needed help, but didn’t know where to go,” recalls Devkota.

After spending years in isolation with little support or understanding from friends and family, Devkota was finally able to give a name to his illness at 25. His sister-in-law took him to the Mission Hospital in Gorkha where he was diagnosed with chronic depression. It took him only five years of therapy and medication to make a full recovery. With an ISC degree in forestry, Devkota began working as a forest ranger in Dang. But something did not feel right. He quit his job and decided to dedicate his life to rehabilitating mental health patients and helping them lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Devkota started out by caring for homeless patients from a one room office in Ekantakuna. Then in 2008, he opened an NGO called Koshish which focuses primarily on women and children who have been abused and abandoned. The organisation also works to increase understanding of mental disorders and remove the stigma and prejudice that prevents patients from being active and equal members of society.

Currently, the protection home in Ekantakuna houses 13 women, including four with children, and three men, all of whom are looked after by a dedicated group of staff comprising of nurses, caretakers, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist.

The 42-year-old’s unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life of mental health patients earned him the prestigious Dr Guislain ‘Breaking the Chains of Stigma’ award in



A former patient is rehabilitating others like him and changing society’s perception of mental illness

PEACE OF MIND



BIKRAM RAI

October this year. The award is given to people, projects, or organisations around the world that have made ‘exceptional contribution in dealing with, or promoting the attention for mental healthcare’ and comes with

\$50,000 prize money.

“We want mental health to be a part of general health,” explains Devkota. “The first step in bringing about this reform is to close down mental hospitals, which still carry a great deal of stigma, and

THE CAREGIVER: Matrika Devkota (above) opened Koshish in 2008 to help rebuild the lives of mental health patients who have been abandoned by their families. Currently, the protection home in Ekantakuna (left) houses 13 women, including four with children, and three men.

replace them with separate mental health facilities. This way we can integrate treatment and also reduce the shame that patients face.”

While individual advocates like Devkota play a vital role in promoting mental healthcare in Nepal, the state’s efforts in the field have been abysmal. The government introduced a Mental Health Policy in 1997, which aimed to make services available to the general population by 2000. More than a decade later, there is little to show for. The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare has pledged Rs 500,000 to

Koshish. But donations to private organisations are of little use when there are no long-term plans in place.

Less than one per cent of Nepal’s total health budget is allocated for mental health. Most of this money goes to the 50-bed Mental Hospital in Patan. The facilities are too meagre to accommodate growing demand. There are only 32 psychiatrists and a handful of clinical psychologists and psychiatrically trained nurses in the country, mostly in cities.

In order to have well-trained professionals, better facilities, and develop a more sensitive approach to mental illness both the state and individuals like Matrika Devkota have to work as partners. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

No peace within, #495
All in the mind, #419
Stigma therapy, #372

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AMAZE

HONDA

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Menu makeover

There is one more reason to visit the Coffee Shop at Hotel Annapurna this winter. The restaurant's menu recently got a fresh makeover under American chef Brian Swiger who took over the kitchen in June. With over 40 new dishes representing South West, Italian and Creole cuisines, the newly minted menu may

just the right mood for our tasting. Light and refreshing, the perfectly prepared wontons were filled with a delicious mix of tomato, onions, pork, and sesame seeds, and together with the orange ginger sauce pleased our palates immensely. Our second appetiser was the South West Egg Roll. With a crunchy base of tortilla

befuddle many but worry not. Each dish is an ode to the three cuisines Swiger spent years specialising and this admiration comes well displayed on the plate.

We had the luxury to taste two appetisers, two mains and a dessert from the new menu. The Pork Confit Wonton, our first appetiser set

topped with shredded chicken, kidney beans, corn and spinach all rubbed in aromatic spices, this was another crowd favourite.

For mains we had the Mushroom Cheese Sandwich and Chimichurri Pork Chop. The hero of the sandwich was the bread- Italian focaccia which as the chef informed was baked inhouse. Accompanied with a vinegar based coleslaw and fries, the mushroom cheese sandwich makes for a good lunch option. The Pork Chop at the Coffee Shop takes the title for being the best in town. The meat was tender and full of taste.

Apart from these dishes, the menu also features few of Swiger's signature dishes which include Creole Barbecue Shrimp, Mexican Tortilla Soup, Catfish Po' boy. But, if you are not much of an adventurous diner, there are plenty of local favourites such as Dosa and Dum ka Murg to gorge on.

The Coffee Shop, Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg

Education for peace

When the right to movement and speech was curtailed during the insurgency, Nepathya toured across the country to spread the message of peace and harmony among the people.

Now for the seventh time, Nepathya is setting off on a nationwide tour to 10 new cities, this time with the aim of voicing the concerns of children.

6 December,	Ratnanagar, Chitwan
8 December,	Birat Chok, Morang
10 December,	Damak, Jhapa
12 December,	Lalbandi, Sarlahi
14 December,	Taulihawa, Kapilbastu
16 December,	Gularia, Bardiya
18 December,	Lamahi, Dang
20 December,	Abu Khairani, Tanahun
22 December,	Myagdi, Beni
24 December,	Gagan Gaunda, Kaski
29 December,	Patan Darbar Square

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Speaking out

A selection of films from the ongoing Human Rights Film Focus

YALA MAYA KENDRA

29 November

11am, *China blue*, story of a seventeen year old girl who works at a Chinese sweatshop
2pm, *Sari soldiers*, six women's courageous efforts in an escalating civil war in Nepal

30 November

10am, *Saving face*, a Chinese-American lesbian and her traditionalist mother are reluctant to go public with secret loves
2pm, *Quest for honour*, an activists works to investigate and eradicate honour killings in Kurdistan



1 December

12pm, *Girl power*, all dolled up, exploring the commercialisation of 'girl power' and the damage it does
4pm, *Pray the devil back to hell*, an inspirational group of women in Liberia who join together to stop a civil war that claimed 100,000 lives
6pm, *The price of sex*, a compelling film about young eastern European women who are drawn into a world of sex trafficking

BRITISH EMBASSY

3 December

10am, *Cover girl culture*, explores how the

fashion industry impacts on women

12pm, *Soongava*, a breakthrough Nepali film about two women in love struggling with cultural norms

4 December

11am, *From fear to freedom*, women around the world join together to speak out
2pm, *Because our cause is just*, on the struggle of women in the 'Arab Spring'

5 December

10am, *Abuelas*, grandparents try to discover the fates of their grandchildren whose parents disappeared in Argentina's 'dirty war'
2pm, *Desert flower*, story of a Somali girl who fled an arranged marriage at 13 become a super model

Human Rights Film Focus

Runs till 6 December

<http://www.hrffn.org/half-the-sky-film-arts-festival-2013/festival-program/>

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FORGET US N





GONE: Hari Sunwar shows a photo of his father (standing in the centre) who was mistaken for a Maoist and shot by the Army in Jumla Bajar in 2003.

OT The people of Jumla are waiting for post-war justice and for their men to return home


TEXT AND PHOTOS by JAN MØLLER HANSEN

Nepal is a country of contradictions. The stunning Himalayan landscape, among the most fascinating and beautiful on the planet, stands out in sharp contrast to the widespread poverty and a lingering sense of hopelessness among the tens and thousands of Nepalis who live at the margins of society.

Like most other districts in the mid-west, the men of Jumla have migrated to bordering Indian towns for seasonal employment and there are only women, the elderly, and children to be seen. One cannot avoid thinking about the future of these children. Where will they go and what will they be doing in a few years? Will the boys follow in the footsteps of their fathers? The women, on the other hand, get up just before sunrise and toil in the fields and in their homes until late in the evening. How long will they carry on for?

Hari Sunar was my trekking guide 20 years ago when I first walked around Lake Rara. I met him again during my most recent trip. Hari and his family are Dalits and traditional goldsmiths by profession. In 2003 at the height of the insurgency, Hari's father went out for a morning walk not realising what was going on in Jumla Bajar. He was mistaken for a Maoist and shot dead by the Army. Another local, who arranged our trekking this time round, recalls how he was forced to feed Maoist combatants for 10 years just so that his neighbours would be spared the bullets.

During the dark years of war, the people of Jumla were witness to numerous atrocities and human rights violations. Hundreds were tortured, raped, disappeared, and killed in the district by both the state and the rebel forces. Like other families across Nepal, Hari and his friends in Jumla await the truth.

Lalit Jung Shahi of the Nepali Congress won in the direct ballot in Jumla-1 last week. But promises of a new constitution, of new ways of governance do not make much sense to the people here. Shahi and the 600 members of the future CA would do well to heed to Jumlis' plea for closure. 
www.janmoellerhansen.smugmug.com

Jan Møller Hansen is a photographer working with social documentary. He lived in Nepal from 1991-1995 and is back in the country working at the Embassy of Denmark in Kathmandu.

nepalitimes.com 

The first day of Dasain, #677



Thor: The Dark World

Aside from the horrendously selfish and infuriatingly inane running commentary by the two men sitting behind me during the first half of *Thor: The Dark World*, I would say (after I had gotten over my initial grumpiness) that there were bits of the film that I thoroughly enjoyed.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

This second *Thor* retains all the fresh and humourous elements of the first origins film that came out in 2011 and was directed by Kenneth Branagh, who bowed out of helming this one. Alan Taylor who took over has wisely kept all the cast and the characteristics



that charmed the first time round. I for one will admit that I love all kinds of cinema and am definitely guilty of sitting through some pretty bad movies purely for the rush of being in the theatre and sinking into the magic that is cinema, however, do not panic, this second installment is far from terrible.

Chris Hemsworth is god-like as usual as Thor, and while poor Natalie Portman's character, Dr Jane Foster (Thor's love interest) is sadly without any kind of spark, we do have once again the lovely and hilarious Kat Dennings reprising her role as Darcy Lewis, Jane's intern, and then of course there is the formidably talented and devilishly attractive Tom Hiddleston as Loki, the morally challenged but charismatic brother of Thor, as well as the elegant Rene Russo as Frigga, Thor and Loki's mother, Anthony Hopkins as Odin, Thor's majestic father, and the ever great Idris Elba as Heimdall - the sentry to Asgard, one of the Nine Realms and Thor's home world.

The plot of the film is nothing extraordinary: an old nemesis of Asgard, the Dark Elf Malekith, arises after a millennia to

destroy the universe (anything less than the utter destruction of the universe these days is regarded as unworthy story matter). Somehow, Jane Foster, herself an astrophysicist, manages to absorb the Aether, a substance that Malekith must possess in order to obliterate the world as we know it, and of course, Thor must step in to save the world and the woman he loves. Yes, yes, I know it sounds boring, but let's just accept that we all know it turns out well and we're just along for the ride.

Go see the film if you think it's your cup of tea: it has some hilarious one liners, a cameo here and there from the other Marvel films, the now obligatory bonus at the end of the credits that teases us into anticipating the next gazillion dollar blockbuster, and noisy spectators aside, it all makes for a fun and relatively restrained 112 minutes of fun.

And, because this needs to be addressed: a word to anyone who reads this column and thinks poor old *Thor* is unworthy, yes, cinema can and should be art, but it can and ought also to be pure fun. Don't stick your nose up in the air about films like *Thor* - they allow thousands of people across to world to forget their troubles and lose themselves in pure fantasy for a few short hours - and that is no small thing. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

REST ASSURED: Chief Election Commissioner Nilkantha Upreti (*left*) talks to leaders of parties who are demanding a recount of votes, at the EC office in Kantipath on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

THANK YOU VERY MUCH: Leaders of Nepali Congress on a victory rally in Bhaktapur-2 on Monday.



DEVAKI BISTA

FINE STUFF: Russian ambassador to Nepal, Sergey Vasilievich Velichkin (*left*), inspects an artwork at the Handicrafts Trade Fair in Bhrikuti Mandap on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

HERE COMES THE SUN: A woman stands in the morning sun at Khokana on Tuesday.

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Guilty unless proven Innocent

REVIEW

In Anup Baral directed, *Court Martial*, trooper Ram Bahadur (Sudam CK) is doomed. Facing court martial for killing one officer and wounding another, his case is almost already decided. Presiding at the bench to spell out the imminent sentence is Col Rupak Singh (Rajesh Hamal), a man of fierce reputation who has little time for subtleties.

But Ram, it turns out, is the ideal soldier. Polite and respectful, he has never had discussions, let alone fights, with anyone. His superiors speak glowingly of him and are puzzled why he would be trigger happy when on duty. To his credit, Ram even refuses to say anything against the prosecution when asked to the witness



RAJAN KATHET

stand. So why did he do it? Not convinced with what lies on the surface, his lawyer, Captain Bikas Pokhrel (Subash Thapa), makes some unsettling discoveries. An army man with a brother fighting on the other side of the war,

Pokhrel knows that feudal tendencies run deep in the army. Ram Bahadur is a Dalit and his surviving target Captain GB Rana is a proud and chauvinist aristocrat. The two have a history of one-sided abuse, which Pokhrel, the knight in shining white to Rana's

pantomime villain, is keen to expose. The Nepali translation of Indian writer Swadesh Deepak's hit play, *Court Martial*, about semi- feudal and caste-first India of the early 90s fits seamlessly to the Nepal of 2013. Deepak's hero is a low-ranking soldier, compelled to obey without question every order that comes his way, despite legal guarantees to the contrary.

Court Martial marks the first ever theatrical performance for veteran Kollywood actor Rajesh Hamal. Where was he all these years? Or rather, where were we? Director Anup Baral deserves our gratitude for extracting such a layered performance from him. But it is Subash Thapa's smiling, well-read lawyer who steals the thunder from the great hero of Nepali film. Can his persistence save Ram Bahadur from punishment or will fate hand out poetic justice? 🇳🇵

Sunir Pandey

Court Martial
Cast: Rajesh Hamal, Subash Thapa, Diya Maskey, Karma, BS Rana, Dayahang Rai, Sudam CK
Directed by Anup Baral
Music by Jason Kunwar
Rs 300 & Rs 500, Theatre Village, Uttar Dhoka, Runs till 2 December, 5pm, 9751023023, www.actorsstudio.com.np



Gaia Restaurant & Coffee Shop is easy to miss if you're not looking for it. Tucked in a quiet alley off Amrit Marg in Thamel, its dusty white and maroon sign competes with a dozen others. But the restaurant is a nice respite from the honking cabbies and hawking rickshaws of the main fares.

Gaia offers a full menu of well-composed Eurasian and South Asian dishes at fair prices. For those opting for an earlier meal, it also serves reasonably-priced breakfast and brewed coffee options. My dining companion and I arrived around 7pm on a Monday night to a nearly full house. With the floor spread between four seating areas, we had no trouble finding a cosy spot.

Our meal started with a selection from the cocktail menu and some appetisers. The cocktail menu is nothing out of the ordinary, but with prices at either Rs 260 or Rs 320, it is a better deal than the overpriced Nepali beers. The drinks were strong and refreshing with ample mint and



lemon in my companion's Mojito and lime in my Cuba Libre, both Rs 260.

Our appetisers were similarly delightful. The pumpkin-cream soup from the specials menu (Rs 240), delivered with a side of garlic French bread and a garnish of cream, boldly and successfully blended cinnamon spice, pumpkin and celery. The chicken wings (Rs 280), heavily fried and properly sized, lay in a delicious barbeque glaze mixing tomato and tang. These two dishes exemplify the determinedly middle-brow aspect suggested by the atmosphere, menu and pricing at the restaurant. The affected nonchalance would be both a charm and a sometime deterrent throughout the meal.

Our two main course selections came off a specials board laden



SOMEPLACE ELSE

LAWRENCE MILLER

with delicious and fresh-sounding items. The fish kabob (Rs 450) was grilled and served in a delicious tomato and capsicum-based gravy with a side of garlic butter rice and grilled vegetables. The rice was an obvious choice for a side, but the grilled vegetables paired very well with the fish, one accentuating the other's seared flavour. The fish's texture was firm, almost like chicken and not quite flaky. The

manager explained that this fish is sourced from the Himalayas, frozen and then carefully softened in the kitchen. I was impressed by the lengths the restaurant went to source the fish as much as by its taste.

Our other main dish was a stuffed capsicum with a side of mashed potatoes and a small salad (Rs 360). Despite its vegetable base, this course was much more filling



than the fish due to the cheese stuffing and the huge mound of buttered potatoes to its side. The dish was good - the stuffed capsicum was at once rich and freshly biting - but was a bit heavy on the uptake. The dish would have benefited from some extra gravy to help the potatoes down, an assortment of grilled veggies, or simply fewer potatoes. On the whole, though, the meal was very satisfying, a pleasant mix of effort, execution, and experimentation.

The mood throughout our dinner was pleasant and light-hearted as a hum of chatter played against subdued music. Ours, the most gregarious of waiters, wasn't the easiest to flag down, but this reviewer is not one to hold a grudge. 🇳🇵

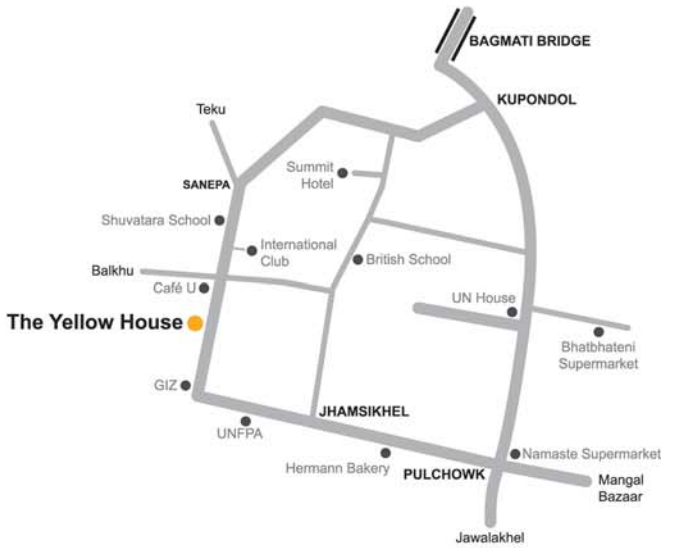
Lawrence Miller

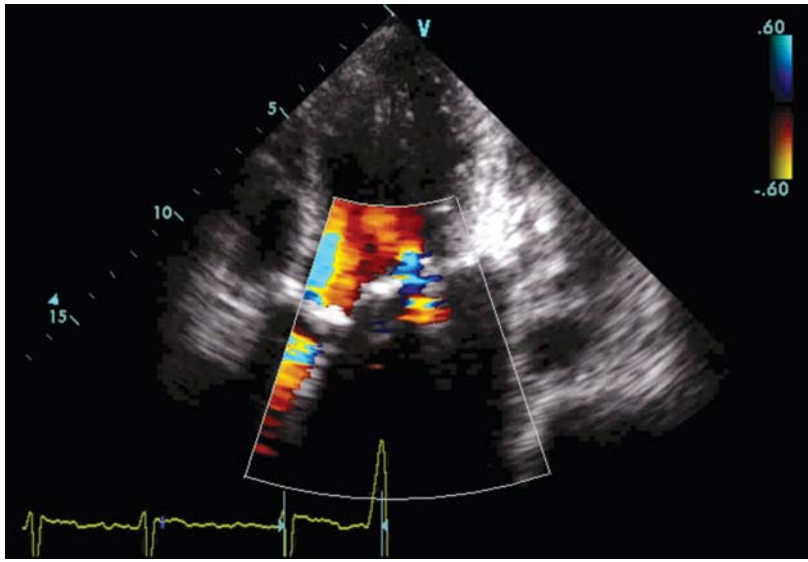
How to get there: once you enter Thamel, take the first left leading towards Jyatha. As you are walking, keep an eye out for a white and maroon signboard to your left. It will point you to the restaurant.

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Listening to your heart

Krishna Kumari, 24, from Palpa arrived at the hospital complaining of palpitations. She felt her heart was racing. When she was 12, Krishna had fever and developed uncontrolled movement of her limbs and tongue for a month although she



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

never lost consciousness. In her adolescence she also had painful joints and the pain migrated from one large joint such as the knee to the next. But this too subsided over time with aspirin.

On examination at the hospital, the doctor detected abnormal heart murmurs and asked Krishna to undergo an echocardiogram (*pic, above*) or an ultrasound of the heart. Findings from the echocardiogram revealed the patient was suffering from rheumatic heart disease, one of the most common heart problems in the country.

Like many diseases in Nepal, Krishna's illness has an infectious etiology. It generally starts out with fever called acute rheumatic fever (ARF), which is

almost universally caused by very well-known bacteria called streptococcus, more precisely group A streptococcus that leads to pharyngitis or sore throat. Approximately three weeks after an episode of sore throat, rheumatic fever with joint pain may begin.

In about 70 per cent of patients who suffer from the fever, joint pains are the predominant symptoms. Chorea (uncontrolled flailing limb movements that Krishna endured) is seen much less, in about 2-30 per cent of patients. Around 60 per cent of those with ARF develop rheumatic heart disease. ARF is prevalent largely in developing countries because of poverty and overcrowded settlements.

In medical schools in Nepal, listening to heart murmurs caused by rheumatic heart disease is an important part of training. The most commonly affected heart valve by rheumatic heart disease is called the mitral valve and narrowing in the region of this valve (mitral stenosis) causes a typical murmur. Students are extensively tested on their ability to pick up this murmur on examination of patients.

The skill of carefully listening

to heart sounds with the stethoscope and determining the kind of murmur and which heart valve it may be originating from is gradually disappearing. This is because it is so much easier to do an echocardiographic study and generally come up with a precise diagnosis. It would be ideal if doctors today carried out physical examinations with the same rigour as their predecessors and used echocardiogram to confirm the diagnosis. But the good news is that ultrasound technology is developing so rapidly that small, portable, and user-friendly echocardiogram machines are available for use even in remote corners of Nepal.

What is most important in the treatment of rheumatic heart disease is monthly injections of penicillin. A sore throat caused by streptococcus bacteria which is a very common cause of pharyngitis can easily exacerbate the heart condition of a patient with rheumatic heart

disease. Hence, monthly injections have been found to be useful in preventing further valvular damage which sometimes requires surgery.

Thanks to the immense and exemplary work of cardiac surgeon Bhagwan Koirala, who initially headed the Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre in Bansbari, many Nepali patients now have access to proper heart surgery necessitated by complications of rheumatic heart disease. Prevention is better than cure, so proper, judicious treatment of sore throat with appropriate antibiotics will help avoid the problem in the first place. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Rock on

Bose's dominance in the premium headphone market will remain unchallenged for a long time to come with the recent launch of the AE2w Wireless Headphone. Stylish, lightweight, and (finally) wireless, these superb-sounding and gorgeous-looking headphones will have audiophiles the world over nodding their heads in rhythmic approval.

Sibling to Bose's AE2i and AE2 headphones (both wired), the AE2w retains their excellent sound without the hassle of unruly wires. Be it music, movies, documentaries, or TV shows, AE2w handles them with ease to produce noticeably richer and more natural sounding audio, which really has to be heard to be believed. The gadget continues with Bose's hallmark of deep smooth bass, and crystal clear audio.

The AE2w's sleek design brilliantly complements its excellent sound. The black metallic casing oozes class, it is cushioned around-ear fit, and weighing in at a mere 150 grams, the headphone allows for hours of extremely comfortable listening. The AE2w utilises Bluetooth technology to wirelessly connect to your device. The rather straightforward Bluetooth pairing is done via the module on the left side of the headphone, which also houses a built-in rechargeable Lithium-ion battery and a microphone to take calls. With a range of 30 feet, your days of wireless freedom have truly arrived. The AE2w is capable of connecting simultaneously to two devices,

which is handy especially when you are watching a movie on your laptop/tablet and you happen to receive a call on your phone.

The seamless transition from your movie to your call, then back to your movie is truly practical.

The AE2w is also superbly backed up by its built-in rechargeable battery which lasts approximately eight hours of intensive use on full charge. If you happen

to run out of juice, then you also have the option of removing the Bluetooth module and connecting a traditional 3.5mm audio jack.

Bose's legendary sound has never come cheap and priced at approximately Rs 30,000, the AE2w is no different. The headphones certainly seem a tad expensive, but that is perfectly understandable given the quality and convenience it offers. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's verdict: Bose is famed for its awesome sounding audio products and with the AE2w, the American company has definitely set the bar high.



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As assembly elections to the Indian capital approach, the new Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) faces a host of accusations, most of which are either unfounded or difficult to prove. It's not known what impact these accusations will have on the AAP, but the anti-corruption citizen's party has re-imagined contemporary Indian political culture.



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

The AAP has reclaimed the ideals of Indian democracy that have been so persistently violated over the decades that they are now simply dismissed as manifestations of bygone idealism. The AAP's charm lies in its audacity in attempting to translate this impractical idealism into reality.

When the AAP was formed less than a year ago, Indian political pundits thought it was bound to be a non-starter. Presumably, they reached this conclusion because their own perception of the political culture's sheer imperviousness to impulses of change. They said that in order to succeed, a political party must adhere to one or two of the six principles of the Indian polity and the AAP did not seem to subscribe to any of them.

The first principle: charisma. The AAP lost the services of its most charismatic



HINDUSTAN TIMES

Democracy's guerrillas

For the first time in four decades, India is getting an alternative political party to hold its own in elections

leader, Anna Hazare, who was opposed to his comrades entering politics. Charisma, we all know, helps overcome organisational shortcomings. Second: money. It was deemed the AAP couldn't possibly muster the massive financial resources required to be competitive, even in a quasi-state such as Delhi. Its anti-corruption rhetoric was bound to alienate corporate moneybags, as would its avowed principle of making public the names of donors.

The third principle: cronyism. Its members had no

prior experience of electoral politics and did not belong to families steeped in Indian politics for generations. The AAP, therefore, could not depend on India's famed patronage system to gather votes. Fourth: firepower. The party lacked the muscle considered necessary to intimidate the poor into cast their ballot in its favour. Fifth: manpower. The AAP didn't possess cadres who have been ideologically schooled and trained, as is true of the Left parties and the BJP.

And the sixth and most

important principle: audience. The party's appeal was said to be confined to the middle class, which is considered notoriously fickle in its political allegiances and too indolent to even turn up at the polling booth. The AAP's rhetoric did not even target a populous caste, which could constitute its committed voter-base and to which they could then weld other social groups.

Almost all opinion polls have predicted that the AAP is slated to perform well. Should it indeed poll a respectable vote-share, it could perhaps

become the only new Indian party in recent times to succeed even as it flouted the six basic principles of India's political culture.

No doubt, the last 30 to 40 years have seen a plethora of political parties emerge on the Indian landscape. However, most of them have been splinters from one or another organisation and have had as their spearheads those who were already seasoned politicians. For the first time in four decades, the AAP could emerge as the only new, centrist party to hold its own in an Indian election.

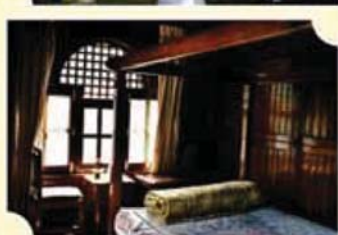
It has taken the AAP tremendous energy to defy the existing political culture. Its activists are what a friend calls democracy's guerrillas, politicians overcoming obstacles through ingenious methods, whether in collecting funds or launching their poster-war or social media jousts.

The AAP's ability to gather 'clean money' is decidedly the reason behind the hypocritical attacks the Congress and BJP have launched against its relatively small kitty of Rs 200 million.

Should the AAP manage a good showing in Delhi next month, its experiment could spawn a ripple effect in India's more than 100 urban constituencies. It could then test the electoral waters in neighbouring Haryana state, where the opposition seems dispirited and decimated, and enter Mumbai, where goonda-gardi is considered the rite of passage for politicians. Should it fail, it still would need to be applauded for endeavouring to restore democratic ideals to the Indian polity. ajazashraf@yahoo.co.uk

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GOING LOCAL

This year, voters supported candidates familiar with their constituencies

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Pre-poll predictions indicated that this time round, voters were more drawn towards local aspirants with credibility and a proven track record. Barring a few exceptions, most constituencies rejected high-profile, 'tourist' candidates and cast their ballot in favour of locals, regardless of their caste, ethnicity, or party affiliation.

Pitted against heavyweight Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the fiercely contested Kathmandu-10 constituency, Nepali Congress' Rajendra Kumar KC, who is a native of Chobhar, defeated Dahal by a margin of more than 7,500 votes. In 2008, he had lost to Dahal by 11,000 votes. KC started his political career in 1974 as a student leader and became actively involved after the 1990 Janandolan. In the same year, the NC nominated him to chair the party's Chobhar Village Committee and he went on to become the regional chairman in later years. During the 1993 local elections, he was elected as chairman of Chobhar Ward-2. KC



WINNING WAYS: Rajendra Kumar KC of the Nepali Congress celebrates his victory in Kathmandu-10 in front of the BICC building in Baneshwor.

is a well-known figure in the area and has worked alongside locals on various community projects.

In Jhapa-1, UML's Rabin Koirala managed to woo voters with years of development work in the region. Born in neighbouring Panchthar district, Koirala spent most of his childhood in Jhapa and completed his education from here. Starting in 1990, Koirala remained a district committee member for 19 years. Then in 2009, the party elected him to the district chairman post where he has served two terms so far. After winning the 1998 local elections, he served as mayor of Mechinagar and worked to

bring electricity to the municipality. Koirala was also instrumental in turning the gravel road in Kakarbhitta bajar and the one joining Kakarbhitta-Bahundangi into concrete roads. Currently, he is the vice-chairman of Manmohan Memorial Hospital in Birtamod and has also headed the management committees in Kakarbhitta Multiple Campus and Kakarbhitta High School.

Winner of Jhapa-4, Prem Giri from the UML has made a name for himself in the community as a social worker. Giri, who is the former chairman of Khudunabari VDC, runs an NGO and has been advocating for safe drinking water and health posts in the

area. He has also travelled from village to village giving leadership training, nutrition education, establishing self-sustaining cooperatives, and writing project proposals for local organisations. Residents of Jhapa-4 chose Giri to represent them in the CA not because of his ties with the UML, but due to years of hard work in the region.

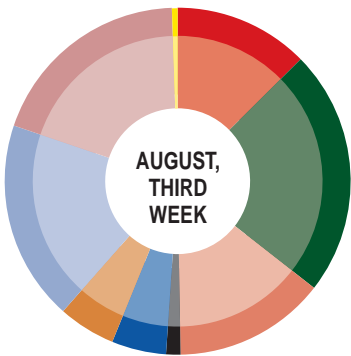
The NC's Dik Bahadur Limbu of Morang-9 was defeated in the 2008 elections by a small margin, but managed to crush another heavyweight, senior UCPN (M) leader and former finance minister, Barshaman Pun, this time round. Limbu started out in leftist

Swing voters

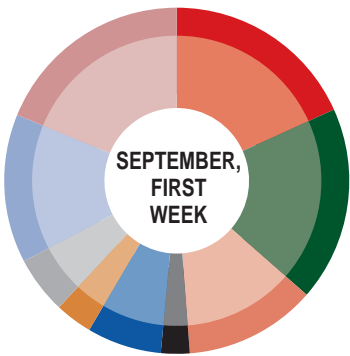
In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, *Himal Khabarpatrika* asks 374 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on politics. One of the questions put out repeatedly was who they would vote for in the second Constituent Assembly elections.

From the first survey we did in the third week of August to the last one in the second week of November, right before the polls, it was clear that the Maoists wouldn't do as well as they did in 2008. A large share of their dwindled support was redistributed among the NC and UML.

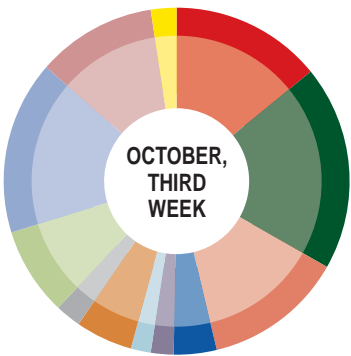
In August, one in five persons we interviewed said they were unsure which party they would vote for. This figure dropped to one in seven by November, but ultimately it was the undecided voters who decided which way the results swung.



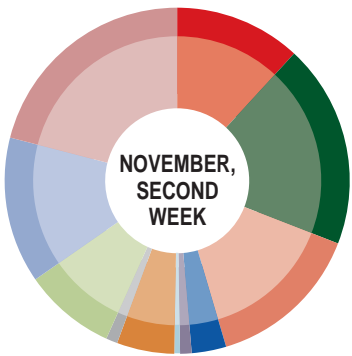
- UCPN (M) 12.6%
- NC 23%
- UML 14.2%
- CPN-M 1.3%
- Madhes parties 5.1%
- RPP-N 5.3%
- Don't know 18.7%
- Won't say 19.3%
- Others 0.5%



- UCPN (M) 12.3%
- NC 18.2%
- UML 12.3%
- CPN-M 2.7%
- Madhes parties 7%
- RPP-N 3.5%
- Independent 3.5%
- Don't know 13.9%
- Won't say 18.8%



- UCPN (M) 14.1%
- NC 19.1%
- UML 13%
- Madhes parties 4%
- RPP 2.1%
- RJM 1.9%
- RPP-N 5.3%
- Independent 2.4%
- No one 8.2%
- Don't know 16.2%
- Won't say 11.2%
- Others 2.4%



- UCPN (M) 11.8%
- NC 19.1%
- UML 14.5%
- Madhes parties 3.2%
- RPP 1.1%
- RJM 0.1%
- RPP-N 5.4%
- Independent 1.1%
- No one 8.6%
- Don't know 13.7%
- Won't say 21%



BIKRAM RAI

“Constitution before 2015”

Interview with Rajan KC of the Nepali Congress who defeated UCPN (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Kathmandu-10

Why do you think the people picked you over a powerful and influential leader like Dahal?

In 2008, people voted for Pushpa Kamal Dahal from two constituencies in large numbers. But he neither worked for the people nor for the constitution. He failed to deliver on his promises even when he was the prime minister. That is why Dahal cannot be called influential and powerful.

Also the previous polls took place in an atmosphere of violence and great uncertainty. The Maoist combatants were still in their cantonments and the YCL was very active. But this time there was no such fear. The people had seen Dahal's true colour and were tired of his drama. So they chose me.

What makes you so popular in your constituency?

Over the past 25 years, I have worked among the people and contributed to development projects in the area. Nepalis believe that the NC can maintain peace in the country and steer it towards progress and prosperity. That is why they voted for me.

Will you be able to keep the promises you have made to the people?

This election was organised first and foremost to draft a new constitution. We will work on completing the constitution within a year and then focus on social and economic growth in the next four years. The 1990 constitution was drafted under the leadership of Congress and this time too we will work according to the people's mandate.

Any message for your supporters?

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who voted for the NC. We plan to write a constitution that is inclusive of all identities and also helps erase the existing conflicts within our society. We will only create as many states as we can afford. The UML also agrees with our agenda.

politics, but joined the NC in 1986. He has served as the village and regional level president as well as the party's co-president for the district. His dedication to local development projects earned him the trust of his constituency.

Chandi Prasad Rai, who works as a teacher at a local school, is extremely well-liked in his constituency of Morang-2 and won the elections on a UML ticket based on his excellent reputation and involvement in social work. If students cannot afford to pay their exam fees, Rai waives off the money and lets them take the exam.

Winner of Morang-1 Rishikesh

Pokhrel of the UML, winner of Morang-4 Shiva Kumar Mandal of the UCPN (M), and winner of Morang-5 Amrit Aryal of the NC are all popular candidates in their constituencies.

Similarly, Krishna Bhakta Pokharel, who won in Chitwan-3, has been actively working at the grassroots level for the past two decades and is a well-respected figure in the community. Soft-spoken Pokhrel entered the UML in 1983.

In Kaski, the NC's Sharda Poudel (no 2) and the UML's Sita Giri (no 4) are well-known leaders in the district, who have a keen understanding of local needs.

The years Sushila Chaudhary



CHANDI PRASAD RAI
MORANG 2



DILIP GACHHADAR
MORANG 3



RABIN KOIRALA
JHAPA 1



PREM GIRI
JHAPA 4



KRISHNA BHAKTA POKHAREL
CHITWAN 3



SUSHILA CHAUDHARY
DANG 2



PARBATI DC CHAUDHARY
DANG 1



NARA BAHADUR CHAND
BAITADI 2



JANAK RAJ CHAUDHARY
KAILALI 1



SITA GIRI
KASKI 4



RISHIKESH POKHAREL
MORANG 1



RAJU KHANAL
DANG 3

spent fighting for the rights of women and marginalised communities in her constituency of Dang-2 was finally rewarded when she emerged victorious in elections. Chaudhary, who ran from an NC ticket, is currently the president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative. Raju Khanal also from the NC won in Dang-3 because of his emphasis on using local resources to kickstart development in the district. His friendly, polite nature also garnered him immense support.

Nara Bahadur Chand of the NC managed to defeat senior RPP leader and former Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand in Baitadi-2. He attributes his win to popular votes from commoners.

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Lokatantrik)'s Janak Raj Chaudhary won from Kailali-1 not on the strength of his political credentials, but rather because of his reputation of being a good and honest

teacher.

Chairman of the UML and former Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal lost out in Sarlahi-1 to Shambu Lal Shrestha of the UCPN (M). Shrestha started out his political career in the early 90s with the Nepali Congress and became district secretary in 1999. He also won the local elections of 1992 and 1998 and was elected as chairman of Pattharkot VDC. He got a ticket to run for elections after defecting to the UCPN (M) in October this year. Despite the UML having a stronghold in this constituency, Shrestha defeated Khanal by a margin of more than 600 votes because the locals trusted him with the responsibility of representing them in the new CA. 🇳🇵

With additional reporting by Gopal Gadtaula, Kamal Rimal, Sabita Shrestha, Madhav Baral, Bachhu BK and Debika Ghartimagar.

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Work in progress

BBC Sajha Sawal, 24 November

Q&A session with UML leader Ishwar Pokharel, NC leader Minendra Rijal, political analyst CK Lal, and UCPN (M) spokesperson Agni Sapkota on what the election results mean for the future of Nepal.

The people of Nepal have fulfilled their duty, but will they get a constitution this time?

CK Lal: The first thing we can learn from this election is that Nepalis want a constitution at the earliest possible date. The people don't want a complete upheaval, but an improved status-quo. So the challenge for the parties is to draft a constitution that treats everyone equally, addresses identity, is inclusive, and also regards capacity as a basis for federalism. They cannot afford to squabble among themselves like last time.

Minendra Rijal: Yes, it will be written. Both the NC and UML asked people to vote for 'democratic parties' and this time it looks like we will have a majority. But it doesn't mean we will keep the Maoists out of the process.

Why is the UCPN (M) trailing so far behind in the vote count?

Agni Sapkota: People voted for us, but there was massive electoral fraud from the moment the officials transported the ballot boxes from the booths to the district headquarters. I can give you hundreds of examples.

But all national and international monitoring agencies said this year's elections were far better than the 2008 polls.

Agni Sapkota: The Nepali public fully agrees with our agenda, but their voice has been suppressed. Certain parties are spreading rumours that we are crying foul because we have been defeated. But someday, the people will find out the truth about how their votes were hijacked in 2013. A constitution can be written without us, but it will be an exact copy of the one drafted in 1990.



CK Lal: Listen, one can seek legal recourse to fraud. But if the powers that be themselves have sanctioned this malpractice, there is no solution. We have to leave it to history, just like we found out about the fraud in the 1980 referendum only after the 1990 uprising.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has threatened to boycott the CA and return to the streets. Does the party want to drag Nepal back into war?

Agni Sapkota: The country has regressed to a feudal era. It's all part of a grand design. We are busy discussing this issue. Mind you, electoral fraud is a serious matter.

Is it not a better idea to let Khil Raj Regmi's government carry on with day-to-day state affairs while the lawmakers concentrate on drafting the constitution?

Ishwar Pokharel: We agreed in April that this government would hand over power to an elected body. If we want to amend this accord, all the parties will have to come to the drawing board once again.

What will the other parties do if the Maoists decide not to participate?

Minendra Rijal: My job is to ensure everyone participates. The Maoists obtained over one third votes in 2008, but they took that as a sign to do what they please. It is clear that the mandate this year has given the green light to the NC and UML's proposals. However, the Maoists need to be a part of the process, it would be foolish to ignore them.

CK Lal: The NC accepted defeat in the 1980 referendum and boycotted the 1982 elections. The show went on. The state wrote a constitution, but could not prevent the 1990 uprising. While writing the 1990 constitution, the UML agreed but not without a note of dissent. The consequences are there for all to see. The state cannot stop moving forward.

[nepalimes.com](#)

Watch the complete video



Flights of fancy

Yashoda Timsina, Nepal, 24 November

नेपाल

When Ek Nath Dhakal chartered a Fishtail Air helicopter to Achham, the crowd that assembled there to greet his vehicle of choice almost swept him aside. As president and the only MP of the Nepal Pariwar Dal, he spent Rs 5.5 million of his campaign fund on booking choppers. He was not alone. Almost every senior leader of the major parties took the aerial route around the country.

Aviation companies say it costs Nepalis \$1,250 (Rs 125,000) per hour to charter a helicopter. According to the Election Commission, UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal took up to four hours going to and coming from remote districts and took two hours to go to nearby places, which jacks up his bill to Rs 6,500,000. His former deputy Baburam Bhattarai spent Rs 5,700,000 in total.

When it drafted the election code of conduct, the EC had banned parties from using helicopters for publicity. But a source inside the EC says that the UCPN (M) lobbied hard and successfully to change the rules.

Twelve companies in Nepal are currently licenced to fly helicopters in Nepal's airspace. "Even 12 companies could not fulfill the parties' demands," admits Fishtail's Senior Operations Manager Shreehari Kuikel.

Second chance at nation building

Shreekamal Duwedi, Setopati, 26 November

सेतोपाटी

In the last seven years, the country's faltering economy went from bad to worse with thousands of people fleeing abroad for better opportunities. The same leaders who claimed to have fought a war to emancipate the marginalised, moved into lavish palaces. It was our mistake to have expected so much from such destructive minds. So this time round, the voters showed the Maoists what they truly thought of them.

Abraham Lincoln had once famously said, "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." None of the parties in Nepal should underestimate the power of information. Today's technology savvy Nepalis refuse to be fooled by the identity rhetoric that parties use to stay in power.

The once omnipresent force in Nepali politics, UCPN (M) have been sidelined in this election and the responsibility now falls on the shoulders of the Nepali Congress and UML to rescue us from the brink. This is their chance to redeem themselves and they must respect the people's mandate by ushering in economic growth and prosperity. They need to be committed to nation building rather than getting stuck in endless power struggle in the cabinet.

Had the political parties been honest after the 1990 election and worked for the country, Nepal would have made remarkable progress by now. They now have an opportunity once again to set things right. So it is an earnest appeal from all Nepalis to the political leadership to rise above personal gain and drive the country towards the path of prosperity.

Not this dog's day

Rajan KC, mysansar.com, 23 November

मेरो संसार

My previous blog post outraged a lot of people whose world exists only on social media. The hatred they spewed in the comments showed that there was not much difference between the blind followers of political parties and the equally blind followers of the group Bibeksheel Nepali. After the Kukur party's dismal performance at the ballot box, those who couldn't stop praising the candidates and were attacking my article, must have realised that the realities of life are much different than how they appear in social media.

Unlike what they show in Bollywood movies, one cannot expect to become an alternative political power overnight. Coverage in the international press doesn't help much either. To do politics, one must understand politics and the public's psychology. Only then can they be more influential in spreading awareness. Only then will the public trust them and join their cause. I think the recently conducted poll has helped Bibeksheel Nepali assess its actual strength and understand the difference between getting one vote on election day versus thousands of likes on Facebook.

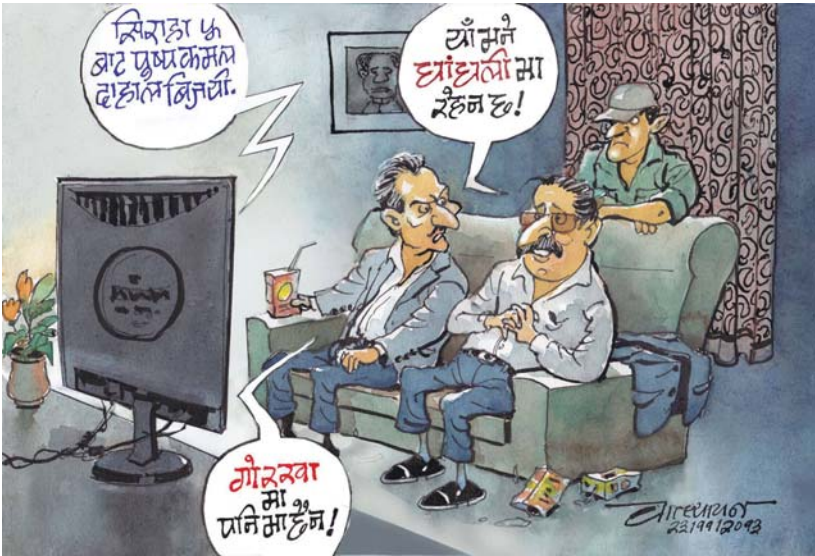


We need young people in politics, but they must have a good understanding of politics, of their country, of leadership, and know the importance of organisation. However, Bibeksheel Nepali candidates deserve our praise for carving out a niche for themselves in such a short time and getting far more votes than other independent aspirants. They now need to assure voters that casting their ballot for the dog did not go to waste. They need to maintain their clean image, ensure they actually do what they say, and are aware of their own faults before pointing out the failings of others.

This is just the beginning for Bibeksheel Nepali. I pray for their bright future and hope to see them as prime ministers and presidents one day. But once again I request them to move beyond social media and reach out to common Nepalis in the real world. To be a leader one must connect with the public on a deeper level. Social network is merely one medium of organisation, there are many others.

Votes for Bibeksheel Nepali

- Govinda Narayan Timilsina, Kathmandu-1: 832
- Santosh Pradhan, Kathmandu-4: 422
- Ujjwal Bahadur Thapa, Kathmandu- 5: 1,163
- Pukar Bam, Kathmandu-8: 660



TV: "Pushpa Kamal Dahal wins in Siraha-5."
Dahal: "No fraud there then!"
Bhattarai: "Or in Gorkha!"

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in Kantipur, 17 November

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



If they bring back the 1990 constitution, we will go back to 1995.

UCPN (M) leader Baburam Bhattarai, Naya Patrika, 28 November

Dr Baburam Bhattarai and me

If Dr Bhattarai hadn't been born, my brother would be alive

RAMESH KHATRI

Even though I didn't want to, fate has made my life intersect with that of Dr Baburam Bhattarai. The party of which he is the chief ideologue cruelly killed my brother, Mohan Khatri, at a hotel he ran in Mude of Sindhupalchok in 2002.

When they brought his body home after the post-mortem, my nephews told me: "Don't look at his face, you won't be able to sleep." My last sight of my brother was a body wrapped in a plastic sheet.

Those who had seen my brother said there was a big khukri gash on his brow, four of the fingers of his right hand had been chopped off, he had deep knife wounds on his neck. It was Dasain time and even sacrificial goats would have been treated better and killed swiftly to shorten the pain. Not my brother. He wasn't killed in battle, he was attacked by 20 armed cowards and their orders apparently came from Agni Sapkota. But it is Dr Bhattarai who bears the ultimate responsibility. If he hadn't been born, my brother would be alive.



My other indirect relationship with Baburam Bhattarai is because of my friendship with his teachers at Luitel Amar Jyoti School in Gorkha, Thomas and Mary Varughese. After I decided to become a disciple of Lord Jesus in 1972, I used to pray often with Mary Varughese at the Putali Sadak Church.

In an interview in 2003 in *Nepali Times* Thomas Varughese had said: 'Baburam's goals are good, but the end does not justify the means. Baburam is smart, he should learn from history.' When he went to the United States in 2008, Baburam went to meet Thomas and Mary and his former teachers might

have asked him: "Baburam where did you lose your way?" They would not have agreed with a war that ended up killing 16,000 Nepalis, whatever the goal, or their student wading in blood to come to power.

Baburam studied in a missionary school and became a revolutionary, just like another communist, Joseph Stalin. Before he died, Stalin had killed 20 million Russians. The only other communist who outdid Stalin in killing people was Mao, who was responsible for the deaths of up to 80 million innocent Chinese. Baburam used to have a figure of Mao in his office when he was prime minister. Even atheists, it seems, need to worship someone.

Thomas Varughese did not teach Baburam violence, he learnt that in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, inspired by other mass murderers in history. But from his speeches, it is clear Baburam's conscience is bothering him now. He brought up The Hague at the Hetauda Plenum earlier this year and he must have realised that international law does not respect the revolutionary justice he used to justify the murder of fellow human beings. Maoist leaders now will have to think twice before visiting any other country besides India and China.

I had two chances to be face-to-face with Dr Bhattarai, but I couldn't get myself to shake his blood-stained hand. Thomas and Mary Varghuese taught Baburam that one has to atone for one's sins. The best way for Bhattarai to atone for his crimes is to change his behaviour, to abandon violence and embrace compassion.

I learnt forgiveness from Jesus Christ. I have forgiven Dr Bhattarai for my brother's gruesome murder. What does forgiveness mean for me? I will never take him to court, nor will I seek revenge against him. But I will never respect a man who even today protects a convicted murderer like Bal Krishna Dhungel, or lets the YCL loose to break up anti-violence demonstrations outside Baluwatar.

Without true atonement, Dr Bhattarai will not be respected even if he is powerful. The souls of 16,000 people will nag at his conscience. The spirits of Dekendra Thapa, Ujjan Shrestha, Muktinath Adhikari, and countless others will pursue him until he admits his mistake and changes his ways. If the killers of Thapa could confess to his crime and ask for forgiveness, why can't

Dr Bhattarai?

Bhattarai's prime ministership had the dubious distinction of being called the most corrupt in Nepal's history. The treasury was looted to pay allowances to 3,000 phantom Maoist guerrillas who didn't exist and Rs 1.1 billion was pocketed by Dr Bhattarai's government

itself. He threatened those who exposed this, saying it would 'endanger the peace process'. With that kind of plunder, development in the country didn't stand a chance. Bloodshed can bring governments to power, but it will never ensure good governance. www.nepalchurch.com

nepalitimes.com

For full version of Nepali text The villagers' support kept me going, #116 History comes a full circle, #142

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Youngish Turks and Old Geezers

It was bound to come to this. No sooner did the election result trends show the Kangresis and the A-Maleys far outpacing the A-Baddies, than they went back to their traditional fun and games of leg-pulling and back-stabbing. These are very early indications, but at this rate don't expect a new cabinet to be agreed on before 2014. First, the triangular fight within the Kangresis among Lion Brave, Ram Chunder, and Shusil Da has to be sorted out. SuzieQ rooting for Uncle Jhoos hasn't helped the Koirala klan one bit, by the way, and we will need an interpreter for simultaneous translation from Nepali to Nepali if Uncle Buwa ever makes it to Balu Water. The Lion of the Far West is itching to become PM for the fourth time so he can work towards beating the national and international record set by Surya B. Lord Ram thinks he deserves to be PM because he fought and lost 17 CA elections in 2011 and feels he needs to be compensated by the party for the humiliation he had to go through for the sake of keeping PKD out of power. As a keen follower of Nepali politics, the one thing the Ass has learnt is that in Nepal history keeps repeating itself as a fart.



And that is just for the prime ministership. It doesn't take a space cadet to figure out that the other battle royal will be between the NC and UML with both trying to outdo each other in horse-trading for the choice portfolios.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

And if the Youngish Turks in both parties thought they would finally break the glass ceiling to be in govt, they have another thinking coming: the octogenarians have to kick the bucket first before the septuagenarians get their chance and only then will it be the young ones' palo. So, if the Old Geezers finally give Gagan Thapa a portfolio it will probably be the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Sports. Which, come to think of it, will be a great day for Nepali women and children, and may even improve our chances of scoring big in the T20 World Cup next year in Bangladesh.



Even though Nepalis are sometimes prone to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory in international matches, the thing that has made Nepal great is that we hate to lose. When it looked like we were losing against Gen Ochterlony in 1815, we signed a treaty with British

India and gave away more than half our country just so we could keep our territorial integrity and national virginity. It is the same DNA that prompts the Bracket Baddies from accepting the rout in elections. Suddenly it was 'grand design', 'hidden' hand', and 'international conspiracy' once again. Faced with

bitter criticism from within his party for fielding relatives and cronies, PKD had no option but to point his finger at the Army and an external, uncooked enemy. Interestingly, the losers all saw a hidden foreign hand but the winners (including Comrades Ugly, Horrible, Big Plop, Top Man, Powerful Brave) were fine with the results and were against boycotting the CA. Worried that his ambition to become Nepal's first executive president may now be unattainable, Awesome has sent feelers out that he may be willing to settle for replacing Ram Burron in Shitall Palace. But the UML has its own idea in power-sharing with the Kangresis under which in return for letting the NC have premiership, the UML will demand Nembang (yes, the former speaker) as the new president. Not a bad choice.



You get to hear some strange things when politics turns topsy turvy after

an election. It was BRB, it seems, who led PKD into a trap by provoking him to urge a boycott of the vote counting. The Cash had offered Dash 26 PR seats before the elections to bring the rump into the fray, but the Cash itself has barely got 24 PR seats so far. Kiran Kaka and Pukada met in Mahara Dai's home over Nescafe and PKD did a mea culpa in front of Comrade God and Cloudy offering party unity. Then comes the mysterious proposal to allow the Dash into the new CA through a constitutional amendment. If the constitution can be amended to allow a party that actively boycotted elections into parliament, why would anyone fight elections in the future?

And then there is the strange saga of the Foreign Ministry being alarmed by ambassadors going all over the place having private teas with newly-elected leaders. It decided to write stern note verbales to all the embassies to stop it. But the leaders, who feel the visits boost their prestige, leaned on the Foren Min not to send the letter.



So this is what it has come to for the Once-Great Helmsman, to go to the election commission with 13 other smaller parties that didn't win a single seat to complain of irregularities. For once, Commissioner Blue Throat stood firm and told them to bugger off.

The Ass





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