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# NEITHER CHICKEN NOR DUCK

After the Dasain break, the country’s four main political parties staggered back to work. The first order of business was to address the demands from the opposition UCPN(M) that had obstructed proceedings of the House for over a month.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is feeling a bit left out, and so to assert his presence he wanted to revive the High Level Political Committee and head that parallel government body himself. One year later, he is still licking wounds from his party’s election defeat and can’t reconcile himself to the fact that in a democracy the party that wins calls the shots.

Which is why he also wants to take all decisions on the new constitution on a consensus basis, and not by voting, despite the first meeting of the new CA agreeing that ‘in the absence of a consensus on clauses of the new constitution, the issue will be put to a vote in the House’.

So, the Nepali Congress and the UML decided to appease sulking cry-baby Dahal yet one more time. It is flabbergasting that the NC and UML keep doing this - despite their numerical strength in the legislature-parliament they keep behaving like an insecure opposition alliance.

The NC and the UML sat down with the UCPN(M) on 8 October and ironed out a 5-point deal to give Dahal his lollipop: agreeing to his demand of setting up an HLPC and letting him lead it for the first two months. Shameful, but completely in character on the part of the wimps in the UML and NC.

But it is the other three points that they agreed to that have an Alice in Wonderland quality to them. They agreed that families of the dead and disappeared would get Rs 200,000 each. The NC and UML had vehemently opposed this when they were in the opposition, and their agreement



What does the fee Indian cars need to pay to enter Nepal have to do with the price of tea in China?

this time seems to be part of a grand bargain.

The NC and UML also gave in to a Maoist demand to discount registration fees on transfer of property they had confiscated from ‘class enemies’ in the mid-western mountains during the war. Again, why the NC and UML

would agree to such an illegal provision is hard to fathom unless someone was holding a gun to their heads. By the way, is this what the Maoists meant by ‘revolutionary land reform’?

But by far the most absurd point is the agreement on scrapping an increase on tax on vehicles with Indian license plates. Why does a decision that should be taken by the Department of Transportation have to be part of a political power-sharing agreement between the top political parties in Nepal? What has the fee Indian cars have to pay got to do with the price of tea in China? In whose interest are these parties making bizarre agreements like these? None of the five points the three parties agreed to mentions the word ‘constitution’ even once.

So, let us get this straight: Dahal & Co blocked parliament proceedings for a month because the tax owners of Indian vehicles pay in Nepal was too high? For the Maoists to make such incongruous demands was ridiculous enough, but for the NC and the UML to agree to them is even more irresponsible. Who are these guys that we elected taking their instructions from?

Prime Minister Shushil Koirala’s reasoning must be that he doesn’t have the energy to argue anymore with the Maoists, and to have a new constitution by 22 January he is willing to give in to any demand, however irrational or irrelevant. He seems to be a man who just wants to get it over with.

If this is the kind of consensus we need to promulgate a new constitution in the next three months, then may Lord Pasupatinath help us. Compromising on clauses on state re-structuring and form of governance in the constitution is going to give us a document that (as we Nepalis like to say) is neither a chicken nor a duck.

## YOUR SAY

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**DEMOGRAPHY AND DEMOCRACY**  
A perceptive statistics-based analysis that throws a spanner in the works of politics of identity. ('Demography and democracy,' Editorial, #727).

Guy

■ At least there is science/mathematics to backup the general sense of unity which was/is present in Nepal.

N

■ India dictates and our netas obey. Our southern neighbour is the driving force behind all the political drama and chaos that plays out each day in the country. The current leaders of the major parties all owe their fame and fortune to the Indians. Hopefully, the next generation of Nepali leaders will be an educated and independently wealthy lot who can stand up against interfering forces and manage the country's destiny on their own.

Mahesh

■ The map accompanying your editorial clearly shows that the Madhes is no longer populated just by the Madhesis. Except for the Tharus and other indigenous groups, everyone came from somewhere else to settle in the Tarai. In fact, some who came across the border to call themselves Nepali Madhesis settled in the plains after settlers from the hills. Nepal is an interwoven mosaic of ethnicities, to recarve it along ethnic lines is not just daft, it is downright dangerous.

Jay Bahadur

**DANGERS OF DELAY**  
NC and UML leaders believe that since the Dialogue Committee has failed to garner consensus on important issues, these issues should be taken to the CA floor, in line with the CA rules of procedure ('Dangers of delay', Anurag Acharya, #727). They're absolutely right. However, such narrow legalistic interpretation of our current political course sits uneasily with the spirit of consensus that has been the hallmark of the transitional Nepali polity. I agree there can't be absolute consensus on everything, but at least a broad consensus among the four major forces should be possible.

Anil Karki

■ It would be best to go for a minimalist Constitution at this stage and deal with re-structuring later.

David Seddon

■ I wonder if the provisions for amendments are made so stringent that any modification will again tantamount to 'need for consensus' type situation.

Na

■ Granville Austin, an eminent historian and a leading expert on constitutional law wrote about India's constitution: "Indians are less likely to fault the Constitution and more likely to view it with pride both because they created it themselves and it was better suited to their needs." In contrast to this, our constitution making process has seen the involvement of foreign agencies, NGOs and external forces right from the start.

Grimalzee

**DREAM COME TRUE**  
Perhaps you can focus subsequent articles on returning engineers, scientists, professors, doctors, etc ('Dream come true', Guna Raj Luitel, #727). Nothing against those who are starting farms or raising livestock, but there is a killing to be made in the services industry. I just don't know how to get this message across to planners and the general public. Perhaps the medium of op-eds might just be enough to create a critical mass effect.

Namah

**DOLAKHA**  
Charikot in 1987 just seemed right ('Nepal in the anthropocene', Kunda Dixit, #727). After that the cramped spaces and unplanned urbanisation seems to have invaded this region of Nepal - just as it has taken over most of the country. Somehow urban planning has been relegated to such a low priority that I fear all of Nepal will end up becoming a confusing amalgam of roads, water pipes, electric wires, data cables and sewage drains.

**MOBILES**  
"I want to develop softwares that save lives by connecting people. I want to make fellow-Nepalis a little happier ('Mobiles for early warning,' Guna Raj Luitel, #725). Reading about a fellow Nepali doing so well in Japan makes me proud. I wish him all the best but how about returning to Nepal and doing good for your country and its people?"

Anonymous

**SELF-RELIANCE**  
Well, if you google, you can find verifiable evidence against I/NGOs perpetuating poverty so that they

can continue with their business ('Relying on self-reliance,' Ashutosh Tiwari, #725). The problem there (in Nepal) is a new group of elite which has profited from this industry. And they would continue to cook many lies to support their livelihood.

Sanjay Khadka

**RAUT**  
CK Raut deserves to remain behind bars for his secessionist rants ('Extreme at both ends,' Anurag Acharya, #725). He misused the liberty of democracy to voice his anti-national agenda. But, sending Raut to prison has also raised issues of double standard. Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda and other top leaders have openly advocated for identity-based federalism. At one point a single Tarai belt was their agenda, too. Further, the UCPN(M) was the first political party to talk about self determination (another term for autonomy). So, one can argue that Raut's advocacy is not treason at all.

AK

**ASS**  
And as we all know from Newton's Third Law of Thermodynamics, a body at rest will remain at rest unless someone pokes a dalle khorsaani under the aforementioned body's hind quarters ('Attaining nirvana by doing nothing,' Ass, #727).

Nirmal Niraula

■ Not many people know just how funny the Ass column is and this guy writes it weekly.

Leela.

## Times THIS WEEK



KUNDA DIXIT

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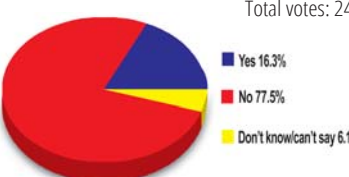
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Q. Do you think the formation of the HLPC will speed the constitution writing process?



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Q. How many states should there be in Nepal?



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# Consensus on contention

There is no point continuing with endless meetings and keep fooling people all the time

“We won’t agree unless you agree with what we propose,” is the recurring message from the opposition parties led by UCPN (Maoist) on fundamental issues of the constitution, especially on federalism, model of governance, judiciary and electoral system.



## THE DEADLINE

Damakant Jayshi

The ruling coalition made up of the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML retort: “We are for consensus; but if we can’t have it, let us enter the process of voting.”

In this back-and-forth, consensus on the disputed elements of the constitution has become a mirage. In the words of Madhav Kumar Nepal, the Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee (PDCC) never had serious discussion on the points of disagreement, a fact confirmed by UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sadbhavana Party’s Laxman Lal Karna last week.

When the NC and the UML proposed to send a detailed list of agreed and disputed subjects with a questionnaire to the full CA, Dahal and Karna ruled it out, saying the PDCC never formally took up the disputed subjects. This was mandatory, since the CA had asked the PDCC to send the plenary such a list.

PDCC Chair Baburam Bhattarai has always been reluctant to endlessly discuss the disputed subjects in the committee, preferring to iron them out at the top leadership level of the parties. Perhaps Bhattarai was being pragmatic, but it does repeat his role in the last CA.

This time we are headed in

the same direction unless there is dramatic change in approach and attitude. We have already missed a few deadlines in the CA calendar of events, and it is looking more and more likely that we will miss the C-Day deadline of 22 January 2015.

The major dispute, again, is federalism. The UCPN (M) wants no less than 10 states, most of these carved on the basis of single ethnicity. Bhattarai recently proposed a different model, which actually is a rehash of the party’s stance on state restructuring.

Last week, while announcing protests against deciding issues by a majority vote, Chairman Dahal maintained that past agreements need to be honoured. This is cherry-picking by a party that lost the elections.

What Dahal and the protesting party leaders are forgetting is that all the 31 parties represented in the CA have agreed to enter the ‘process’ -- voting as per Article 70 of the Interim Constitution if they cannot reach consensus. The draft of the CA Regulations, prepared by a body headed by Sadbhavana Party’s Karna, was passed unanimously on 21 March.

The UCPN (M) and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) led by Bijay Kumar Gachchhadar have clearly committed in their election manifestos to go for voting if consensus fails on any disputed subject in the constitution. Now, Gachchhadar is at the forefront of leaders singing the ‘consensus-only’ tune.

There is a reason behind this. The Maoists and the Madhesis lack the numbers in the assembly to get any of their ideas endorsed whereas the ruling coalition, with backing from the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and others – wields a comfortable two-thirds majority. This is the kind of majority that the CPN-Maoist never had in the last CA

before its split. Even with the support of all Madhes-based and smaller parties which had a united position on the number of Madhes states (at the most two) and ethnicity-based provinces, they were always well short of the required 401 in the 601-

member CA.

For sure, the NC and the UML leaders have gotten carried away by their majority and think they can ram through whatever they want. This arrogance is not helpful in resolving disputes, and they need to genuinely reach out

to Madhes-based and Janajati parties. One way is to take them into confidence, the other is to go ahead and decide the contents as per Article 70 of the Interim Constitution. The first is unlikely, the second is full of risk.

The parties need to admit it is crunch time. Consensus on fundamental issues is not going to materialise, even if one were to ignore Kamal Thapa-led RPP-Nepal, which wants a return to a state of Hindu monarchy. There is no point in continuing with these endless meetings and keep fooling people all the time.

The parties need to put their heads together and find a solution. This time they will not be forgiven if they fail. @damakant

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# Graft at the grassroots

Nepal's political system today can be described as corruption by consensus

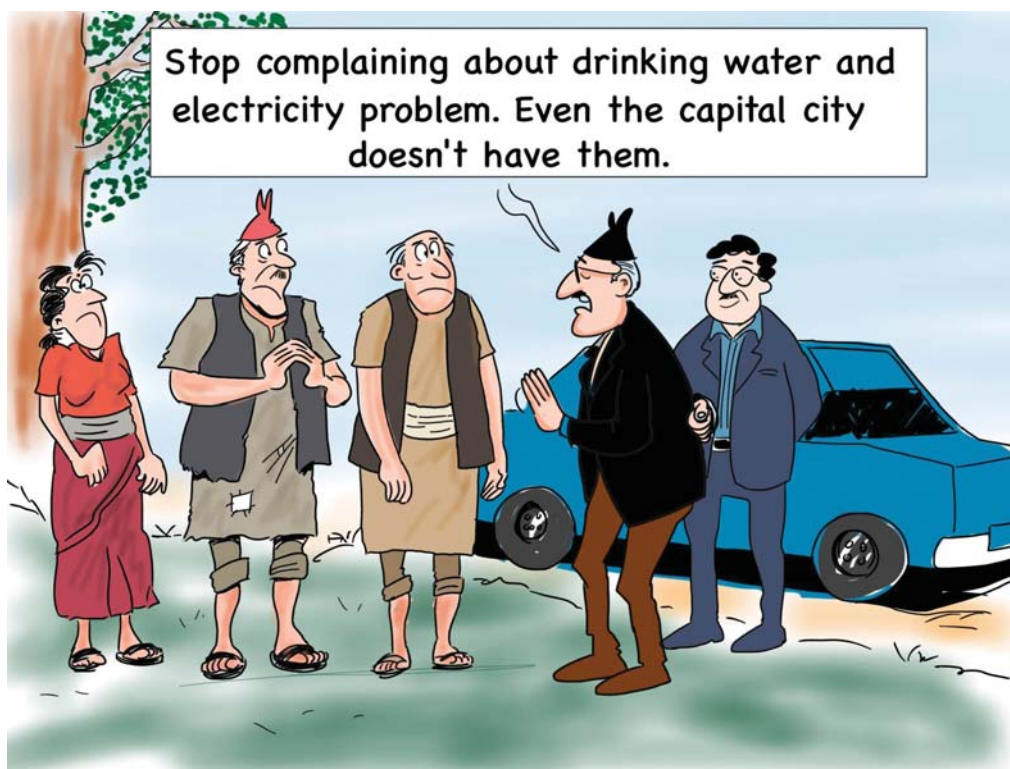
Responding to questions raised by Constituent Assembly Members, the Prime Minister conceded this week that corruption levels have increased in the absence of locally elected bodies across the country. With no elected mayors and village chiefs, he added, resources set aside for development works have been squandered.



**CROSS CUTTING**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

This admission is not surprising. The last local body elections took place in 1998. In 2002, when the civil conflict was at its height, Prime Minister Deuba, citing risks and security, decided not to hold local elections. As a result, since 2002, government-appointed civil servants have been serving as local councilors. But depending on which way political winds blow, these civil servants, most of whom have no real stake in constituencies they preside over, are so frequently and arbitrarily transferred that rare is the one who actually gets to complete a full term as councilor in a village or a town.

This game of musical chair has long been lucrative for local political parties of all ideological shades. In 2006, when political concerns were in flux in the aftermath of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the then government blessed the formation



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

of an innocent-sounding apparatus called 'all-party mechanism', which, once set up in every village, would be run by local political parties to deliberate on local governance matters.

But from that time onward, this all-party mechanism mutated to adversely influence local governance and budgetary decisions in such a way that its interference was seen as a license to engage in 'corruption by consensus'. Despite there being plenty of evidence, Kathmandu-based national parties pretended not to see what went on in the village councils: if the cadres could find sustenance by rigging local

construction contracts and purchase orders, why make life difficult for them? Finally, under pressure from development agencies and local citizens' groups, the government withdrew its recognition of all-party mechanisms last year.

There is, however, the other side of this equation, which does not get discussed in conversations about local government: Given such a sorry state of local governance, how did the poor deal with corrupt officials and poor service delivery? For the most part, they did not. In some cases, thanks to development assistance, local groups received exposure to social

accountability tools, which they used to hold their representatives accountable.

Federation of Water and Sanitation Users, for instance, trained NGOs and journalists on how to be a part of the village-level budget planning process, how to lobby for additional funds for water supply, and how to ensure that the funds earmarked for open defecation-free campaigns actually ended up there. Similarly, in Kaski and Banke, trained radio journalists collected complaints via text messages, and developed programs to broadcast the complaints to local officials for solutions.

Likewise, women and representatives from disadvantaged communities serving on school management committees learnt the basic principles of financial management so that they could ask critical questions to ensure that funds allocated to run the schools were not wasted. With support and training, many local community groups, often run by hitherto voiceless citizens, started hosting public hearings on how programs on education, literacy, nutrition, forestry and the like are faring in their communities.

To be sure, these efforts at raising the status of local accountability could be contextual, varied and idiosyncratic. But the message is clear: even when the government does not have its act together, it has not stopped citizen groups from acquiring skills to continue to press for accountability. In this context, when the prime minister does call for local elections, he will have found that the people have long been ready to demand better services and accountability. ■

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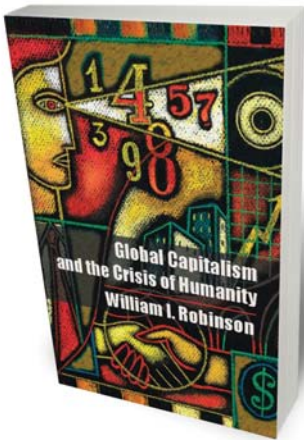
# Capitalism in the age of Ebola

Capitalism, a subject of abiding interest ever since Karl Marx penned *Das Kapital*, has come under intense scrutiny after the near death experience of 2008.

In *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*, sociology professor William I. Robinson enlarges his focus on the impacts of the system evolving under capitalism. A mix of crises that approach systemic proportions is in motion, he argues, threatening 'the ability of billions of people to survive, and raises the specter of a collapse of world civilisation and degeneration into a new Dark Ages'.

The gloomy book serves as a warning: The world is more integrated than we realise, and humanity can either prioritise sustainability or suffer the consequences. 'Capitalism is a system wracked by internal contradictions that generate crises,' notes Robinson. Crises can disrupt a community overnight. Few communities can insulate themselves from the effects of war, climate change, the spread of infectious diseases or pollution. Any community is vulnerable, protectionism is futile, and ignorance is dangerous.

Globalisation rolls along in a highly uneven way – regions, nations, cities, villages have their own pace, tensions and transformations. Yet, he argues, the uneven accumulation is not a function of territory, but rather social relations, including



**Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity**  
by William I. Robinson  
Cambridge University Press 2014  
252 pages paperback  
\$29.99

the capital-labour relation. He questions the feasibility of a tightly integrated world where the wealthiest 10 per cent of people hold 85 per cent of the wealth and the lowest 50 per cent hold but one per cent. The global elite and industrial leaders have more in common with one another than they do with their fellow citizens whatever nationality. Networks of elites, not nations, conduct transactions.

Citizens are encouraged to aspire to lifestyles of the elite and take on debt. Finance pervades all transactions, even quick trips to a grocery store or a routine lunch, creating an illusion for producers that all have more to spend. The speculative global casino economy, with its unsustainable

excesses, disguises the real economy.

Widening inequality gives license to more exploitation, and reckless financial behaviour seems to go unpunished. 'The global mobility of capital under globalisation and especially its ability to move money almost frictionlessly and instantaneously has allowed it to extend the mechanism of capital flight to the planet as a whole,' Robinson writes.

The outlook for reform is bleak, and Robinson unfortunately offers little advice for resolution. Globalisation and integration of national economies have led to common class interests. The challenge for the ruling class is to stabilise capital and minimise crises, and the challenge for the disgruntled poor and middle classes is to organise across borders.

So far, the elites have great cohesion; they are politically engaged, capable of driving or slowing policy at all levels. Still, the most astute, wealthy or not, recognise all too well that efforts to carve out safe communities could fail against threats like climate change, global pandemic like Ebola or determined terrorists who plot alone. Robinson concludes that strategising at the global level is essential to counter the cycles of war, greed and profit-making – with all the distracting panics in between.

Susan Froetschel

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# Where is the justice?

There is little sign that Nepal's leaders are prepared to address atrocities during a war that ended eight years ago

Some 30 countries, from Algeria to Uganda, have established commissions of enquiry into alleged atrocities perpetrated during periods of internal conflict or authoritarian rule, or in a few cases (e.g. Canada), into specific alleged abuses of human rights.



**THE GADFLY**  
David Seddon

Truth-seeking is intended to enable those concerned to investigate and for societies divided by violence to come to grips with 'what really happened' -- particularly with respect to alleged atrocities and/or war crimes committed or perpetrated by individuals, groups or governments.

In some versions of the TRC, it is considered sufficient merely to uncover the truth of what happened to enable the victims and the relatives of victims to reconcile themselves to that truth. In what is often taken as the 'model', the South African TRC -- instigated significantly by the deeply devout Bishop

Tutu -- required those responsible to confess and admit their wrongdoing, often in front of their victims and/or relatives of the victims.

The powerful emotions aroused by this process of 'confrontation' (of a self-confessed perpetrator with both the 'truth' and the victim of the atrocity committed) would, it was hoped, result in a 'catharsis' -- a cleansing or purification -- both for those responsible and also for those suffering from the abuses or atrocities involved, leading to remorse and regret on the one hand, and forgiveness and reconciliation on the other. Desmond Tutu has written in his *The Book of Forgiving* that 'with each act of forgiveness, whether small or great, we move towards wholeness'.

For many, however, this fails to address the issue of responsibility for abuses and the related issues of justice and punishment, and therefore fails generally to generate reconciliation. If justice is not done and seen to be done, the



discovery and presentation of 'the truth' alone (even when confessions are made) may result not so much in 'catharsis' as in heightened anger and, potentially, in even greater inter-personal, inter-group and wider social division.

Those who call for 'transitional justice' argue that the truth alone, with or without

personal confession, will not produce a lasting reconciliation or ability to accept, and move on from, that truth. Forgiveness will not be possible for many victims or relatives of victims and should not be expected, let alone demanded of them, they argue.

In Nepal, the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) at the end of the decade long civil war provided for a TRC. Its establishment was, however, delayed for many years by political power struggles and by the reluctance of military and political leaders to open their war-time actions to scrutiny. Eventually, in March 2013, controversial TRC legislation was passed which merged the TRC and Disappearance Commissions and, despite the CPA and international legal obligations, gave wide scope for arbitrary decisions on amnesty, even for serious crimes. In January 2014, the Supreme Court overturned this legislation.

Some eight years after the end of the civil war this represented some hope of an end to impunity for atrocities and war crimes committed during the conflict. In effect, it limited amnesty provisions, separated the TRC and Disappearance commission to ensure their effective implementation, made suspected human rights violators ineligible for commission appointment, and reduced the politically-appointed Attorney General's discretionary power to decide on prosecution. These were important decisions for transitional justice and independent investigation, and their passing early in the new Constituent Assembly's tenure brought the issue into fresh focus.

However, criticism at the 110th session of the UN Human Rights Committee in March, nearly three months later, illustrated dissatisfaction with continuing slow progress in the reforms, while demonstrations and hunger strikes (which have now resulted in at least one death) reflect the deep

frustration of victims and relatives of victims with this stalling. Civil society, legal professionals, and victims' groups have continued to make public demands for truth and justice, and maintained pressure with protests and efforts to record testimonies of abuses.

New legislation to establish a TRC and Commission for Inquiry of Disappearances was voted through the Constituent Assembly on 25 April 2014, although it was opposed by some smaller parties. Nepalese and international rights groups widely criticized the new law for having effectively re-worked the version already rejected by Nepal's Supreme Court, and demanded that it be significantly amended and made more 'victim-friendly'.

Some proposed changes were included, but these were regarded by critics as insufficient and as largely disregarding the recommendations of the government's own taskforce. The new bill separated the TRC and Disappearance commission, but still failed effectively to address vague wording allowing considerable discretion on amnesties even for serious crimes.

Meanwhile, despite some judicial counter-efforts, successive post-war governments have 'withdrawn' hundreds of cases, including many murder charges, often on the basis that security personnel were 'acting in good faith', especially with politically-affiliated individuals.

Furthermore, the military has continued to shield and even promote personnel accused of crimes, while reportedly punishing would-be 'whistle-blowers'. The case of Colonel Kumar Lama, taken up by the British Crown Prosecution Service in January 2013 after he was accused of responsibility for torture and war crimes has already been subject to several interventions by the government of Nepal in his defence, and his trial is now postponed until 2015.

In an article in Open Democracy on-line (16 June 2014), Liam Anderson argued that 'Nepali citizens have long been denied justice, but continued civil society pressure on the new, long-delayed Constituent Assembly will hopefully improve parliamentary efforts to give the dragging peace process and long-awaited Truth and Reconciliation Commission some resolution'.

Four months later, there is little sign that the government, let alone the leaders of the major political parties and the military, are prepared to recognise the need for a process that does more than try to whitewash Nepal's recent history and brush under the carpet the atrocities and human rights abuses that undoubtedly took place. But the demand for a real initiative to set Nepal's house in order in this matter seems likely to increase. @pigreen

*This is the first of David Seddon's The Gadfly columns in Nepali Times.*

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EVENTS



**Investigation online,**  
A unique opportunity for Kathmandu-based journalists to learn from Paul Myers, a leading international expert on cutting edge opportunities offered by the Internet.  
*22 October, 10am to 12pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, mail editors@nepalitimes.com for registration*

**Together for hope,**  
A breast cancer awareness walk to spread awareness about breast cancer and promote breast self-examination.  
*Rs 200, 18 October, 7am, Patan Darbar Square*

**Startup Grind,**  
A chapter of global startup community designed to educate, inspire, and connect entrepreneurs, share personal stories and lessons about the road to building companies.  
*Rs 200, 19 October, Mahabir's Center for Nepal Connection, Thamel*

**Take the lead,**  
Social entrepreneur Anil Chitrakar will be talking about taking the lead at the 28th session of Cheers Talk.  
*18 October, 2 to 4pm, Mahabir's Center for Nepal Connection, Thamel*

**Move and groove,**  
Nepal's first international dance conference.  
*4 November, 4pm onwards, Sandhya International Dance Academy*



**Tihar Aayo,**  
Nepal celebrates the festival of lights next week. Tihar represents the divine attachment between humans, gods and animals.

**21 October, Kaag Tihar:** Dipawali kicks off with a puja for the *kaags* (crows) to keep sadness and grief at bay.

**22 October, Kukur Tihar:** Next up is a puja for man's best friend, woof!  
**23 October, Gai Tihar (Laxmi Puja):** People worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, by paying respects to the *gai* (cow). People light up their houses at night to welcome the goddess.  
**24 October, Mha Puja:** Newars do pujas on themselves in Kathmandu, and people elsewhere pay homage to Gobhardhan, an avatar of Lord Krishna. Also, *Nhudaya Bhintuna* (Happy New Year!): the Newari calendar turns a new leaf.  
**25 October, Bhai Tika:** Sisters do pujas on their brothers to protect them from Yama, the harbinger of death.



**Inked,**  
A tattoo and lifestyle convention complete with tattoo seminars, food stalls, automobile shows and metal music.  
*17 to 19 October, Bhrikuti Mandap, inkme@nepalinked.com, www.nepalinked.com*

**Art on silk,**  
A showcase of Binita Basnet's latest silk art.  
*17 October to 19 October, 10am to 6.30pm, City Museum Kathmandu, Dabar Marg*



**Breathe in, Breathe out,**  
Deep and detailed learning and practice of a number of yogic breathing techniques.  
*6 October, 2 to 5pm, Rs 1500, Pranamaya Yoga Studio, Patan*

DINING



**Kaiser Cafe,**  
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**Lhakpa's Chulo,**  
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**The Mandarin,**  
Experience mouth-watering, authentic Mandarin dishes like the Tibetan Gyakok set (Rs 1,600, exclusive of tax) or the Szechwan hot pot (Rs 1,800, exclusive of tax) at The Mandarin.  
*The Everest Hotel, New Baneshwor, 4780100*

**Trisara,**  
With dishes like flambéed prawns, crispy chicken, and khau soi, it would be foolish to ignore this restaurant's charms. *Lajimpat*

**Fuji Bakery,**  
Tucked in Chakupat this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat, and banana cake. *Chakupat, Lalitpur*

**Fire and Ice,**  
For the best pizzas in town. *Thamel, 4250210*

**Salt and Pepper,**  
A resto-lounge with a wide variety of dishes to choose from like Hakka Noodles, Hong Kong Chicken and Honey Chilli Potatoes. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

**Grill Me,**  
Warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. *Jhamsikhel, 5535294*

**Mike's Breakfast,**  
Huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal, 4424303*



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## MUSIC

### Silence Festival,

Five international bands and eight local artists will play a lineup of rock, pop and metal music.

17 and 18 October, 12pm onwards,  
Bhrikuti Mandap Ground

### Rock beats,

Rock bands Cobweb, Albatross, Mukti and Revival take over the lake city.

17 October, 3pm onwards, Basundara Park,  
Lakeside, Pokhara

### Rusty Nails,

The blues-rock band Rusty Nails will play their second of six fundraising shows featuring classic covers as well as popular originals.

Rs 500, 18 October, 6.30pm onwards,  
City Museum Kathmandu, Darbar Marg



### Tihar Celebration,

Enjoy live performances by Cobweb, Abhaya & the Steam injuns, House of Foolz,, A.O.M, and more.

18 October, 1 to 9pm,  
KL Tower Food Court, Chabahil

### Jazz extravaganza,

The 12th edition of Jazzmandu festival will feature a series of jazz concerts and programs in various venues of the valley.



17 October, 7 to 9pm,

**Valley Jams:** Different venues in Kathmandu will feature performances by Jazzmandu artists. *Jazz Upstairs, House of Music, Moksh, and Manny's Eatery*

18 October, 2.30 to 10pm,

**Jazz Bazaar:** A marathon of Jazz and traditional Nepali music.

*Gokarna Forest Resort*

19 October, 7 to 9pm,

**Red hot Latin Jazz:** A night of Latin Jazz, featuring authentic Afro-Cuban sounds of the Caribbean. *Hotel Summit*

21 October, 1.30 to 3.30pm,

**Jazzmandu Master Class:** An opportunity for music students & jazz enthusiasts to interact with and learn from visiting musicians.

*Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory*

21 October, 6 to 8.30pm,

**Jazz at Patan:** An evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambience. *Dhokaima Café*

22 October, 11am to 12.30pm,

**Concert for school children:** An opportunity for students to experience music from around the world.

*Alliance Francaise*

22 October, 5.30 to 10pm,

**Jazzmandu Finale:** The finale BIG JAM!

*Hotel Yak & Yeti*

## GETAWAYS

### Raniban Retreat,

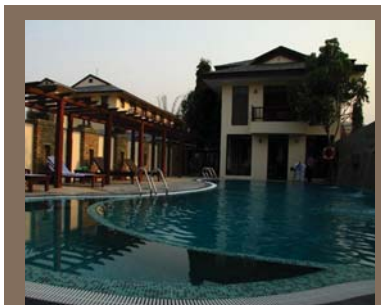
Situated at the other end of the Phewa Lake and nestled inside the Raniban forest, this retreat has one of the best views of the Annapurna range, Phewa Lake, and Pokhara.

*World Peace Pagoda, Pokhara, (61)692136*

### Glacier Hotel,

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*Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61)-463722, www.glacienepal.com*



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# Working for



**L**ike most women in Nepal, 42-year-old Parbati Dhungana wakes up before dawn to take care of her family. Parbati is a mother, wife and farmer, but she is also a female health volunteer, one of more than 55,000 all over Nepal who have been credited with saving the lives of mothers and infants in Nepal.

After leaving her children to the care of relatives, Parbati goes door-to-door to educate people about an upcoming health camp in Bhedabari of Kaski district.

"They might be illiterate and poor, but their hearts are full of love," says physician Narendra Kumar Shrestha about the female volunteers who contribute to the success of his mobile

## HEALTH IS WEALTH (I to r):

Female health volunteers Harimaya (at left, left) and Parbati Dhungana (right) go door-to-door to educate people about upcoming health camps and also conduct follow-ups.

Physician Narendra Kumar Shrestha (right) welcomes staff and patients at a free health camp in Kaski.

Kalpana GC (right, above) came for a checkup for her baby.

A patient receives her free medicines at the mobile clinic (right, below).



# Coming out time

HIV infection rates in western Nepal have come down, but the stigma and ostracisation remain

**SUNIR PANDEY**  
in DANG

**W**ith her green sari, cheerful smile and a daughter in tow, Gita Pun (pic) of Bankhet of Dang district looks no different than any other middle-aged Nepali woman. But four months ago, she decided to let neighbours in on her secret. At a public program, the 37-year-old mother revealed that she had been living with HIV for the last decade. It took considerable courage for her to come out like this, but despite her fears of discrimination

she found acceptance and support. "It wasn't like this before. People who found out I had HIV did their best to avoid me, and would not let their children play with mine. Nobody knew what it was, so I was treated like a pariah," says Gita, now on good terms with her neighbours. Her first husband died 11 years ago, and no one knew he had AIDS. He had gone to work in Mumbai and had died of an undiagnosed illness after coming back and infecting Gita.





# wellbeing

rural clinic at the Bhedabari Primary Health Centre.


“Prevention is better than cure,” says Shrestha, “and this is where the awareness and followup work by the female volunteers is crucial.”

Parbati and other volunteers tell local mothers about the need for clean water, hygiene and sanitation, nutrition and family planning. Indeed, most health problems in rural Nepal like prolapsed uterus or infections can be prevented. “It is not enough to provide free medicines, we need awareness to teach people how to improve their immunity,” says Shrestha.

The health camp in Bhedabari is supported

by UK-based The Mountain Trust, which treated 680 patients in a nine-hour day with eight specialised doctors, five nurses and two lab technicians.

People in rural areas may not have as good access to modern medicine, but they possess a lot of traditional knowledge, which helps them to fight illnesses.

The health camps are also social gatherings where villager meet friends and relatives they haven't seen in a long time. People put on their best clothes and are proud of showing how much their children have grown. 

Merilin Piipuu in KASKI



ALL PICS: MERILIN PIIPUU



SUNIR PANDEY

Gita Pun (left) of Bankhet, Dang, is visited by HIV counsellor Poshan Raj Basnet (centre) and nurse Bhima KC during a regular check-up at her home.

With no one to care for her and her four children, Gita decided to marry again, this time to a Magar man in the Indian army. Three years ago he too died due to unknown causes.

Soon after Gita herself fell ill and was rushed to hospital in Dhangadhi, where doctors told her she had jaundice, tuberculosis, and HIV. At first she was in shock, unable to comprehend that she had been infected by an unfaithful husband, then she was wracked by grief and guilt about having unknowingly infected her caring second husband. After tests, she found only her second daughter, who lives in Kathmandu, has HIV.

Like most people in the neighbourhood, Gita does manual labour at Ghorahi Cement factory and earns Rs 250 a day. She has land behind her two-room mud-and-brick house, but without support she cannot grow food to feed her family. Her son has left for India and her elder daughter got married, leaving only eight-year-old Yamuna by her side.

Once a month, counsellors from Dang Plus, a local NGO that works with people living with HIV, give her checkups. First, nurse

Bhima KC takes Gita through the routine of washing her hands with soap. Then she checks her pulse and blood pressure, and with her torch light checks for wounds on her ears or inside her nose and throat. Gita's temperature is taken - normal - and her medicine-box is examined for a supply of ARV as well as paracetamol. Throughout the check-up, Gita keeps repeating that these checkups keep her alive. Pointing to her nurse, Gita says, “Others go to the temple, I worship her.”


Although Nepal has made good progress in battling HIV-AIDS in the last 10 years, people living with HIV and under ARV treatment, are still hesitant to come out publicly. Dang Plus provides community and home-based care to 172 patients, of whom 108 are on ARVs, but not all of them feel safe enough to reveal their identity.

“We are in constant touch with them and even work with other organisations to make sure they have access to medicine and proper diet. And if they want to come out, we felicitate them as heroes in front of their neighbours,” says Prakash Nepali of Dang Plus.

Tulsipur local Poshan Raj Basnet is one of Dang Plus' 10 staff who are themselves infected. He is keen to have his picture taken and his story told. In 1990 Basnet, then 20, went to Mumbai to find

work and visited the brothels there with Nepali friends. Even after getting married, it was the same old routine: strenuous work, scarce holidays, cards, alcohol, and the occasional visits to the red-light district. In 2006, Basnet was diagnosed with HIV and was forced to return to Nepal two years later. His wife left him, and his children had nowhere to go. He was contemplating suicide when local NGOs convinced him to take ARV treatment.

Initially Basnet himself was pessimistic about his chances of survival. Neighbours were equally shocked and refused to socialise with him. He says: “The thought of taking medicine forever overwhelmed me. But after starting medication, I became physically capable to lead a normal life.”

Since then, Basnet himself came out publicly, and married another woman with HIV who was infected by her India-based husband. He has good ties with his in-laws and also his children. These days he works for Dang Plus in Tulsipur, spreading awareness about the disease and counselling other patients like Gita. 

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

- The return of the microbes, #711,
- An epidemic of stigma and discrimination, #592,
- AIDS 2.0, #592,
- “They don't get rich, they get HIV”, #353,



# Begin Again

Jay Carney's second feature *Begin Again* is a charming concoction that blends in elements of romantic comedy and musical, but without the usual doses of sugary sweetness that can be found in most sub-par films of these genres. Carney's first film *Once* (2007) was about a singer-songwriter couple and their tribulations. The plot of *Begin Again* does not stray far from that widely adored film.



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

Personally, while I did enjoy *Once*, I found *Begin Again* to be far more superior, perhaps because, as is with the most watchable of romantic comedies, *Begin Again* blends in the perfect mixture of wit and humour, in line with the best of the late great Nora Ephron's screenplays. Ephron understood, as does Carney (a writer and director), that contrary to popular belief, romantic comedies cannot rely just on the leads. Without the comedic support of a stellar ensemble cast, these fluffy scripts would collapse because in the end what could be more banal than "boy meets girl, boy gets girl" without a few



hilarious shenanigans in between? *Begin Again* is supported by a cast that represents the best of independent cinema. While Keira Knightley (as Gretta) and Adam Levine (who plays Dave and is also the lead singer of that horrible band Maroon 5) are not your usual indie stalwarts, the musical (but broken) couple they play are surrounded by the likes of Mark Ruffalo as Dan Mulligan, a music producer who is hitting the bottle hard and has seen better days; Catherine Keener as Miriam, Dan's wife; the young but talented Hailee Steinfeld as Violet, Dan's teenage daughter; the musician CeeLo Green plays TroubleGum, a rapper made famous by Dan in his better days; Mos Def is Saul, Dan's fickle but also long-suffering producing partner; and the often under-appreciated James Corden plays Steve, the tubby, hilarious, musically gifted, long time loyal friend of Gretta.

The screenplay is not

particularly original. Gretta and Dave have moved to New York from England to record Dave's first album on which Gretta is a songwriter. The fame goes to Dave's head and he does something awful (you can guess what it is, considering the louche industry against which this film is set) and Gretta moves out, heartbroken. The story really starts when Steve drags Gretta out to an open mike event in an East Village bar where Dan happens to be drowning his sorrows. Dan convinces Gretta to record an album using the ambience of New York as a background, and so begins a particularly delightful story of love lost and gained, and more importantly of friendships forged.

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■ Trailer

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**HAPPENINGS**



**ENDLESS TALKS:** Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee Chair Baburam Bhattarai speaks to journalists after a meeting between the NC, UML and UCPN(M) to discuss disputed issues of constitution, at Singha Darbar on Sunday.



**YES, PRIME MINISTER:** Prime Minister Sushil Koirala meets with a delegation of Non-Resident Nepali Association headed by its president Shesh Ghale (fourth from left) at Baluwatar on Tuesday.



**CLEAN HANDS:** Actor Rajesh Hamal (far left) launches Lifebuoy's global handwashing campaign 'School of 5' at Soaltee Hotel on Tuesday.



**FREE FEAST:** A group of men enjoy a free meal at a 'Curry Without Worry' event at Basantapur Darbar Square on Tuesday.

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Tulsipur : 082-562575





In September, the British Council organised 'From Script to Screen', a three-week film workshop with filmmakers Andrew Rajan and Subarna Thapa to train 17 young Nepalis in the art of movies, from writing the script to making the final cut. Two short movies were collectively made as a result of this workshop and were screened at Theatre Village recently.

The first movie *Departures* is the story of a couple who are waiting for the arrival of the dead body of their son, from, what we suppose is the Gulf region. The paradox is that the day it arrives coincides with the departure of their elder son Amrit. When his uncle points out the large number of Nepali men dying abroad, Amrit cries that he has no other choice. "How can I make money here?" he asks.

Every day, thousands of Nepali youngsters leave for overseas labour while up to four coffins are brought in, an otherwise war-time rate. Here the double tragedy happens to the

same family and the movie plays brilliantly on the duality of arrival and departure. "Our boy comes today," says the grieving father to his wife. We understand that this arrival also confirms his departure from life.

The work of the director of the photography in *Departures* deserves praise. He has captured the perfect light to highlight the mourning atmosphere that gradually rises throughout the film. The characters are interesting too, but the actors lack in rhythm and spontaneity. Of the four protagonists, only Gopal Aryal, who plays the brother of the

dead son, is convincing in his role. There are also some disturbing failures in the sound recording and editing as some sound bites are coarsely superimposed.

The second movie made by the 17 students is *Phota*, Nepali slang for 'photo'. As with *Departures*, the theme of death is predominant.

It tells the story of Lalmani, a villager who wants to take a family picture with his dying father. To do so, he calls for a young boy who has a camera downtown. When Lalmani gets back home with the photographer, he finds his father has already

passed away and his uncle forbids him to take a picture of the dead body.

For *Phota*, students have directed the well-known Rajkumar Pudasaini, perhaps using Subarna Thapa's connections to entice the great actor into this project. But equally deserving of accolades is Jeevan Adhikary, a young actor studying at Oscar International College, who plays the photographer flawlessly. Adhikary, with his good looks and nuanced performance, heightens the contrast between himself and Lalmani as the fortunes of both take a turn for the worse.

The screenplay here is pretty simple but the movie is subtly directed. Unlike in *Departures*, the lighting in *Phota* is poor, especially for the outdoor shots. But the movies are somehow complementary, because *Departures* has what is lacking in *Phota*, and vice-versa. ■

Stéphane Huët

# Movies 101

## REVIEW

# Fusion Restro & Bar

The first thing one notices about Fusion Restro & Bar is its cosy atmosphere.

Comfortable couches and paintings recalling Picasso's touch sit on one side, and behind a glazed partition lies the bar whose walls are adorned with pictures of rock and reggae legends.

However, the music played during the course of our meal was neither rock nor reggae. The playlist shuffled from Pharrell Williams to One Direction, with songs changing abruptly, which became a constant irritant.

Because the restaurant was named Fusion, we wanted to sample dishes that showed a perfect mix of cuisines from different parts of the world. The menu here sadly lacks original recipes but offers a wide range of classic continental and Asian dishes.

On paper, the Fusion fries with cream cheese sauce (Rs 295) sounded very appetising. In reality, this starter did little to make your tummy happy. The fries were served cold. The warmth of the tasty blue cheese on the top gave the potatoes an acceptable

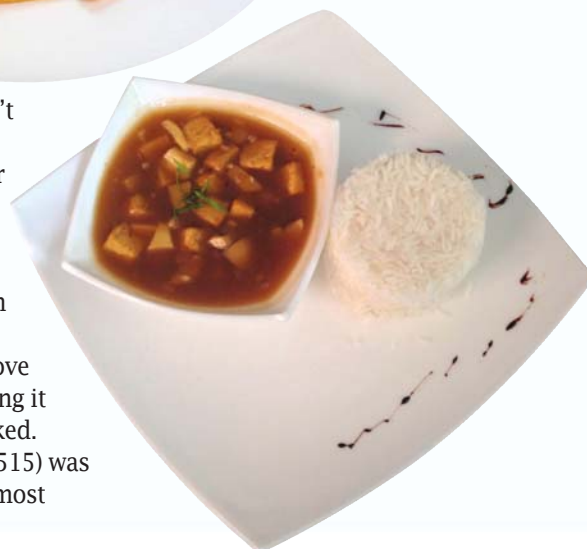


PICS: AYESHA SHAKYA

temperature but couldn't redeem the dish.

Our vegetarian order the sautéed tofu and bamboo shoot (Rs 395) didn't fare any better. The tofu and mushroom stew had mostly an overpowering taste. Above all, the rice accompanying it was cold and undercooked.

The Swiss steak (Rs 515) was the order that we were most



excited about. However, if you expect a Helvetian recipe like we did, you'll be very disappointed. The menu described the dish as a tenderloin steak topped with cheese and rum, and served with sautéed veggies and French fries or mashed potatoes. We were neither asked how we preferred our steak nor asked to choose the side. While the name of this dish refers to the calendaring process of 'swissing' the meat to soften it, the steak that came out was hard and cold. The only good thing about this dish was the sauce which had a hint of alcohol, just enough to reveal the savoury cheese. The mashed potatoes,

even though cold, was really tasty and creamy.

The three dishes were all served at the same time, thirty minutes after we'd placed the orders and each one of them was served cold. It maybe that the restaurant was simply having a bad day or were short staffed because of the festival time, but Fusion Restro & Bar has some serious thinking to do about its food if it wants to stay open in the competitive Jhamsikhel lane where better restaurants have brought down their shutters too soon after their opening. ■

How to get there: Fusion Restro & Bar is located in Jhamsikhel, just before St Mary's School's compound wall appears to the left.



# Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a Carlsberg



# The depression battle

It is estimated that about a fifth of the world's population will experience at least one episode of major depression in the course of their lives, making major depression or clinical depression a common mental health disorder.



**DHANVANTARI**  
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In the Western world, depression accounts for the largest burden of disease when measured by disability adjusted life years (DALYs). DALYs take into account both absolute years of life lost because of the disease (premature death) as well as productive years lost due to disability.

Major depression is at the top of the list of the burden diseases trumping all other common diseases like alcohol abuse,

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes mellitus, and even ischemic heart disease.

Although accurate statistics regarding depression are hard to find for low-income countries like Nepal, many of us have probably experienced first-hand the impact of depression in ourselves or our near and dear ones.

Major depression does not mean just feeling sad for a day or two. The term denotes a more disabling condition which can last from few weeks to months to even years, and adversely affects a person's work and school life, sleeping and eating habits and general health. The depressed person may also suffer from low self-esteem. There is also loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities.

People with depression often mask their illness. Even those who appear to be cheerful and lively from outside maybe suffering from depression, as evidenced by the suicide of actor-comedian



Robin Williams who had been battling depression for a long time.

The good news, however, is that depression can be treated in most cases. Besides counselling, there are many effective antidepressant drugs that can help depressed patients. There are also newer and more

expensive antidepressants in the market, but there is no evidence to prove that these drugs are more efficacious than the older ones like the tricyclic anti-depressants. About 75 per cent of patients will respond to any antidepressant if given in a sufficient dose for about 2 months.

In a country like Nepal where health insurance is a privilege enjoyed by few, it is best to use an effective but least expensive drug with an acceptable side effect profile.

Typically these antidepressants take about two to three weeks to show their salutary effect. If after two months of medication, there is no significant response to treatment, the doctor may decide to increase the dosage. Once the control of the symptoms is established, then the medicine is taken for about six to nine months to ensure there is no relapse at this stage.

For many, this length of therapy may be good enough for cure. However, there are patients who may suffer from additional episodes of major depression and in those cases, the doctor may consider putting the patient on an indefinite maintenance therapy. 🇳🇵

**GIZMO by YANTRICK**

# Kicking balls

If there was ever a game that has football fanatics salivating in wait every year, it has to be the EA Sport's FIFA series. Since taking over the reign from Konami's Pro Evolution Soccer series as THE football simulator game, the FIFA titles have never relinquished their top billing as the highest selling, and highest-rated sports game. Last year, FIFA 14 became the first in the series to be available on the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One platforms, making many of us gamers extremely happy.

FIFA 15 tops that glee. The latest in the series, FIFA 15 is a true showcase of the computing power and capabilities of the next-generation gaming consoles.

EA Sports has always strived to make its FIFA series as real as possible, and the visuals don't get any more life-like than what is played out on the FIFA 15. Yantrick had a good laugh misleading clueless friends and family into thinking they were watching the real deal many-a-time.



From pre-match routines to stadium shots of jam-packed stands pulsating with chanting fans, from the half-time highlights to the cutaways and replays, the sublime animations reflecting on-pitch battles and the wearing down of playing surfaces, and the post-match analysis, FIFA 15

different in FIFA 15? Well, dribbling and turning are more gratifyingly responsive, and overall there is a more natural feel to each game: the loose balls, the interceptions, the deflections all make it more unpredictable and thus more gratifying.

has left no stone unturned to make games feel like they are actually sitting among thousands at a Chelsea-Arsenal London derby.

So besides the anticipated improved visuals, what exactly is

One of the major gripes of FIFA 14 were the dumb goalkeepers and animations. FIFA 15 corrects those errors. The way goal keepers react to deviations in the ball's flight path, twist their bodies in mid-air when it takes a deflection off a lunging defender's knee, jabb out a leg to turn aside a shot that seems to be squirming past them is like marvelling at Petr Cech's skills in real life. Players now also respond to big moments on the pitch as they would in real life, courtesy of what EA Sports calls 'Emotional Intelligence'. Old favourites like Manager Mode and Ultimate Team remain, and online play is better.

There's little else you'll do once you have got your hands on this beautiful game, so I suggest waiting until the Tihar holidays for a one-on-one with your buddy. 🇳🇵

**Yantrick's Verdict: Retailing at round Rs 7,000, FIFA 15 is the game your PS4 was built to showcase.**

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SETOPATI

Ram Kumar Prasad Sah, who was sworn in as the Chief Justice last week by the President, takes office at a time when Nepal's judiciary has fallen into some serious disrepute. He will be in office for nine months, and after his appointment assured the people through the media that he would not compromise on the independent judiciary at any cost.



**LEGALESE**  
Binita Dahal

The reason this statement sounded a bit defensive was because of the public perception that the previous interim electoral government led by Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi had compromised on the independence of the judiciary by removing the separation of powers. The Supreme Court has also been tainted by the appointment of six controversial justices earlier this year.

Khil Raj Regmi's appointment was criticised by legal and media

fraternity, and after Regmi stepped down, the gavel went to Damodar Prasad Sharma who immediately came under fire for the appointment of the controversial judges. Though Regmi's government was successful in managing peaceful, free elections with a huge turnout last year, his decision to head the government undermined the independence of the justice system. Damodar Sharma's lack of accountability tainted it further.

Sah knows that he has to set a lot of things right. He did speak up against the appointment of the justices by Sharma, and wrote a note of dissent against two of the nominees. But, for the moment, he has no option but to retain them in the court.

Sah is from Mahottari, and is the fourth Chief Justice from the Madhesi community. Not only is he from the plains, but he is a Sudhi, considered a 'lower' caste. His Madhesi predecessors tended to be from the higher castes. This itself is of great symbolic value to show that Nepal's branches of government are becoming inclusive.

However, tokenism is not

# Supreme once more

The new Chief Justice is from a minority within a marginalised community, this is hugely symbolic


enough. Sah will have to prove that he is capable of reforming and cleaning up the judiciary. In his previous verdicts, Sah for his part, has shown decisiveness, competence, and demonstrated a clear vision. He started his career as a section officer in the Supreme Court 40 years ago, and during his long career has never been tainted by controversy except that he once asked for Rs 7 million for his medical treatment in Bangkok.

He has his work cut out: the Supreme Court has a massive backlog of 19,000 cases and not enough judges to clear it up. Sah's predecessor, Damodar Prasad Sharma, had vowed to reduce the

backlog of pending cases from 17,000, but instead the number of cases increased while he was Chief Justice. Previously, Sah was one of the members of Judicial Council, and hopefully this will address the concerns of lawyers about Chief Justice appointments.

Sah has said that he will prioritise cases of rape and human trafficking, and clear them within three months. He has also promised a paperless court, which sounds a bit ambitious. Even so, he took a good first step of publishing the list of cases at 10am on the first day of his appointment. He has ordered Justices to be at the bench

by 11am promptly, and believes in a good start being a job half done.

A Transparency International report has shown repeatedly that there is massive corruption inside Nepal's court system. Sah will have to tackle growing corruption within judiciary and lessen the influence of power brokers in verdicts. Since graft is so ingrained, and almost regarded as standard operating procedure, Sah will need all the commitment he can muster to tackle corruption in the courts. Only then can he reassure the public that the Supreme Court is an independent arbiter of justice. 

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# AFTER THE STORM

This week’s blizzard in the central Himalaya was a wakeup call to install effective early warning weather systems

KUNDA DIXIT

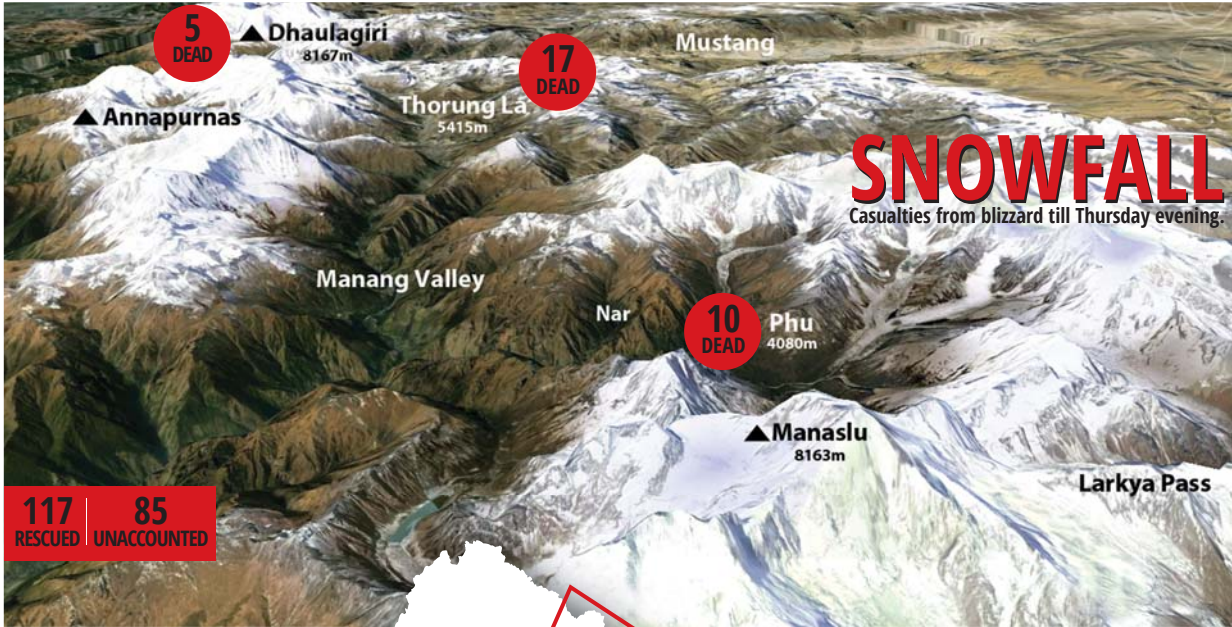


NEPAL ARMY

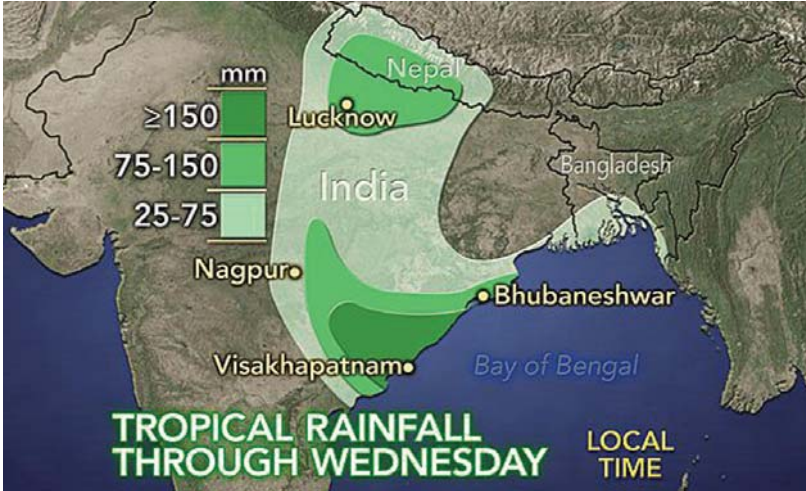


SURAJ SHAKYA

**DISASTROUS AUTUMN:** The storm came in October, when locals and trekkers least expected it. Nepal Army helicopters arrived on the morning after to ferry out the survivors of the blizzards and avalanche in Manang (*left*). Hundreds of trekkers are still stranded in the Manaslu Circuit (*right*) where hikers on the trail look like ants amidst the snow cover in a picture taken on Wednesday morning.



GRAPHIC: AYESHA SHAKYA



**WE WERE WARNED:** Weather forecast maps like this one by meteorologist Eric Leister predicted two days before the storm hit Nepal: ‘the core of the heaviest rain into the middle of the new week will likely sweep to the northeast toward the India-Nepal border’.

The devastating death toll from this week’s blizzard and avalanches in the Annapurnas has once more highlighted the urgent need for weather early warning for trekkers in the Himalaya.

Till press time on Thursday, 32 people were confirmed dead in Manang and Mustang, with 85 still unaccounted for. There is still no word on dozens of trekkers who were planning to cross Larkya La in the Manaslu circuit on Tuesday.

This is not the first time blizzards and avalanches have hit the high Himalaya in recent years. Post-monsoon typhoons from the Bay of Bengal have been particularly disastrous. In November 1995, 13 Japanese trekkers and 11 Nepali guides were killed as they slept during a blizzard on the Gokyo trail. In October 2005, 18 Nepali and French climbers were killed in an avalanche on Kang Guru in Manang.

The casualties among trekkers in blizzards and floods tend to be higher in the peak autumn season, since heavy rains are not expected. However, weather experts say October is when trekkers and mountaineers

have to most careful because it is the cyclone season in the Bay of Bengal.

“Given that there is mobile and internet access along the Annapurna circuit, you cannot blame weather alone,” says climate analyst Ngamindra Dahal, “this wasn’t a surprise storm. The real question is why weren’t the warnings heeded?”

Indeed, Indian and Nepal meteorological offices had been warning about heavy precipitation from the remnants of Cyclone Hudhud as it veered north towards Nepal ever since it made landfall on 12 October. International tv channels warned of heavy rain in western and central Nepal. Two days before the storm arrived, Nepali media had warned farmers to protect their harvests.

The information was there, but it doesn’t seem to have got to the trekkers high up behind the Annapurnas. The question is why.

One reason could be that weather forecasts are usually unreliable and Met offices have

cried wolf so often that many people ignore the warnings. Also, for a country that is so dependent on trekking and mountaineering, there isn’t a formal channel to provide official and dependable early warning to people in the mountains. Since climate change is making weather more unpredictable globally, there is all the more reason to have multi-disaster preparedness systems in place.

While trekkers in Chame and Manang watched weather reports on tv or on mobile internet, up the valley lodges do not have electricity and there is no phone signal. Trekkers at Thorung Phedi or Kangshar would essentially have been incommunicado unless they had satellite phones.

The Annapurnas had seen a spell of brilliantly clear and crisp autumn weather till Sunday, which suddenly turned overnight. By the time the blizzards hit on Tuesday 14 October, many trekkers and their guides were trapped high up on the passes.

Former British Gurkha officer and avid trekker Gen Sam Cowan says the Thorung or Larkya traverses are closer to mountaineering, with the very high and exposed mountain

passes requiring long commitment at high altitude, and allowing plenty of time for the weather to change rapidly for the worse.

“If it looks bad, it probably is going to be bad,” says Cowan, and advises, “stay put in your tent or shelter, wait for one day or two. To hell with the flight home. No one should have ventured out to cross Thorung La with the weather as threatening as it was, nor should their trekking guides have allowed it.”

The other aspect is proper disaster planning with preparation and proactive dissemination of early warning of weather. In 1999 when a cyclone hit the coast of Odisha in India, 10,000 people were killed, but with new satellite-based early warning, communications and mandatory evacuation of coastal areas there were minimal casualties during cyclones Phailin in 2013 and Hudhud this year even though physical damage from both storms were huge.

It is not enough for the authorities to know about approaching weather through

weather satellite imagery, they need to communicate this quickly and effectively to people and visitors on the mountains. In Nepal, this could be done through the media, networks like the Trekking Agencies’ Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Mountaineering Association, Himalayan Rescue Association, or even telecom companies which can send warnings through mass texting to selected parts of the country.

In the high mountains of Nepal there are telecommunicaiton blind spots, which means trekkers may not receive warnings. To get around this, it could be made mandatory for huts at Thorung Phedi or below Larkya to have CDMA phones. Trekking groups on passes above 5,000m could be required to carry satellite phones.

Says Cowan: “Sadly, it is all so obvious but people think that because it is trekking, they can take chances. You can never do that in the high mountains where the weather can change so quickly.”



# Narrow escape

The first trekkers from Israel, Hong Kong, and Germany rescued from the Mustang side of Thorung La were brought to Kathmandu on Wednesday and are undergoing treatment for severe sunburn and frostbite at the Army Hospital in Kathmandu. After a night of heavy snowfall and high winds, some of them had decided to walk down because the sun was out.

“Our plan was to stay in the tea shop to ride out the storm, but when we saw that it was all clear and bright the next morning we decided to walk down,” said Yakov Megreli (*pic, below*) at a press meet. But the snow was chest-deep and they got lost on their way down. After eight hours, they could finally make a call on their mobile.



BIKRAM RAI

**HAPPY TO BE HERE:** Israeli trekkers (*l-r*) Linor Kajan, Yakov Megreli, and Maya Ora talk to journalists at the Army Hospital on Thursday after being rescued from the Mustang-side of Thorung La on Wednesday. They credited their guide and the army for saving them.

“We called the travel agency and embassy, and asked them to send helicopters. Until then, we were guided through the snow by our porter. They picked us up on the mountain and flew first to Muktinath before bringing us to Kathmandu,” says Maya Ora.

The Israelis credited their guides for probably saving their lives by advising them not to move out of the tea shop during the storm. Two other Israelis were not so lucky. They were buried in an avalanche below Thorung La along with two Poles and nine Nepalis. At Phu, four Canadians, three Indians and three Nepalis were killed.

At Dhaulagiri Base Camp, two Slovak climbers and their three Sherpa guides from a 11-member expedition have still not made contact after being caught in an avalanche.

Twenty one people are so far confirmed dead and hundreds are stranded and unaccounted for after Tuesday’s storm in the Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Manaslu areas. Seventy trekkers were rescued from Manang and 47 from Mustang as this paper went to press on Thursday evening.

Manang, through which hundreds of tourists attempt to cross the Thorung La (5416m) into Mustang every day, was worst hit. Eighty-five of the 345 trekkers who registered at the ACAP checkpoint on Monday en route to Yak Kharka and Thorung Phedi haven’t made it over to the other side.

Trekkers contacted Germany through a satellite phone and said there was a “large group” of them on the pass waiting for rescue. The message was relayed to the Nepal Army which had three rescue helicopters in the area on Thursday.

The Army had brought out four bodies from the western side of the pass on Wednesday and Thursday. District administration office in Manang said ten trekkers were also buried in snow in the Phu Valley near the China border. 🇳🇵

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PRAKASH DAHAL FACEBOOK

# Pearls before swine

Prakash Dahal, son of UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Facebook, 11 October

facebook

I only wish people did more research before commenting on my pig farm. Some friends seem to be stuck in the past. Some say Bahuns shouldn't be farming pigs. Some say I am showing my worth. Some say black money, some say it's because politics did me no good. I thank you all for coming up with comments that display your own abilities, but I wish to especially thank some people and say the following things to them:

1. This is an age of equality, where you don't look at caste, colour or gender. If you are the type that stirs up ethnic discord, you must be from another planet. And that is that.
2. There is such a thing as dignity of work and I don't think work makes anyone greater or smaller. Are all the world's animals worthless? Are pigs worthless? Is it right to mock farmers like this? Apart from being the world's most respected profession, agriculture is also the traditional line of work of most Nepalis. People who keep their backyards barren are trying to lecture me about my capacity and worth.
3. Some say I kept 10 sows to legitimise my black money. I would like to challenge these people to look everywhere for black, red, green, yellow, or any other colour of wealth that is in our family's

name. They can take everything for themselves if they just give me Rs 100,000. With that money I would buy four more sows and expand my farm. Use your heads. I don't know about other people in the party, but if you find any trace of my wrongdoing I will gladly kill myself. Please, my Facebook friends, find out my black money.

4. I am not a senior leader of a party. I have been walking around the hills with our people's militia since I left high-school 14 years ago. I am only a cadre and I will remain in the party and work for Nepal's benefit as long as I am breathing. I have nowhere to go except politics. Is it sin for us in politics to be creative in other ways? How do you think we earn? Where does the money to study abroad come from? I am farming pigs in my free time so that I don't have to beg from anyone. I don't have a degree in my hands.

I also want to discourage youngsters from mortgaging their land and going for overseas labour. Instead they could use that money to invest in their own land, work four solid hours everyday and watch gold grow out of the land. Is it not more dignified to work four hours a day in Nepal than to be treated like an animal for 18 hours in the Gulf? When I see barren fields and villages empty of youth, I despair. My ambition is to show these youngsters that it is worth doing something right here in Nepal. If youngsters want to try out agriculture, we must respect their choice. Rest is up to you.

# EYES ON GOLD

Himal Khabarpatrika, 12 October

हिमाल

Karateka Bimala Tamang won the bronze medal at the 2014 Asian Games held in Incheon, South Korea, becoming the only Nepali athlete to bring home a medal. A student of Management, Tamang now has her eyes set on the gold.

## What did you feel after your win?

I was very happy to have won a medal for my country. My friends and well wishers were all equally happy.

## How will your victory influence your sporting career?

Winning a bronze is great but it's not enough. I now want to win gold and for that to happen, I have to work harder and focus all my energy and effort into my game.



## How did you motivate yourself to train when the selection committee hadn't even finalised your name?

My coach Dhruba Malla has been very encouraging and supportive. During the selection round, I defeated Chanchala Danuwar, who had participated in ASIAD before. The win was a huge boost for both me and my coach who made sure I trained harder.

## What do you think should be done to improve the results of Nepali athletes at international competitions?

There's always a lot of controversy during athlete selection process for international events. It was the same case during ASIAD. Such things hamper an athlete's psychology and eventually their performance. An athlete needs full support from all sectors to perform to the best of their abilities.



**Speech bubble:** Now, do you know how to write?  
**Board:** Literacy campaign, C-O-N-S-T-I-T-U-T-I-O-N  
**Bag:** CA member

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Basu Kshitiz in Annapurna Post, 11 October

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The Maoists and Madhesh parties demanded that clause, we said no but the prime minister and his party gave their acceptance. ”

UML Vice President Bhim Rawal on why the HLP's tasked to control customs on Indian vehicles, *Budhabar*, 15 October

# PNCC's proposal on contentious issues

Sanghu, 13 October

साँघु

## 1. State restructuring

- A 10 states
- Tarai-Madhesh states: 2
  - Hill states: 8

Madhes State to include Madhesi dominant region in Morang and Kailali in the west and Tharu dominant region in Kanchanpur to fall under the Tharuwan State

- B 9 states
- Mithila-Bhojpur Madhesh State
  - Tharuwan-Awadh-Lumbini State
  - Limbuwan-Mechi State
  - Kirant-Koshi State
  - Tamsaling-Sailung State
  - Newa-Bagmati-Capital State (includes Makwanpur, Chitwan and Nawalpur)
  - Tamuwan-Gandaki State
  - Magarat-Dhaulagiri State
  - Karnali-Khaptad State/Khasan State

- C 8 states
- Mithila-Bhojpur Madhesh State
  - Tharuwan-Awadh-Lumbini State
  - Kirant-Limbuwan-Koshi State
  - Tamsaling-Sailung State

- Newa-Bagmati-Capital State
- Tamuwan-Magarat-Gandaki State
- Karnali-Bheri State
- Mahakali-Khaptad State

Within the states, areas with a concentrated population of a specific caste or linguistic community will be labeled as autonomous zone, protected zone and special zone.

2. Form of governance
- Directly elected presidential system, an inclusive, proportional representation two-house rule, referendum after one term
  - Directly elected prime minister system, House elected constitutional president, Veto power for prime minister
  - Directly elected presidential system, House elected prime minister, Mixed System
  - Election Commission, Electoral College System
3. Electoral System
- Multi-party Direct Proportional Representation System
  - Mixed System
  - Mixed Compensatory System (Representatives from Women/Dalit/Janajati/Madheshi/Arya-Khas/Muslim/and other marginalised communities)



HTTP://NONGKHAINEWSONLINE.BLOGSPOT.COM/

# Royal ex-king

Rabindra Mishra of the *BBC Nepali Service*, Facebook, 13 October

facebook

A lot of people have expressed sympathy after seeing the latest pictures of former crown prince Paras Shah being arrested on drug possession charges in Thailand. This is understandable and it is a sign of humanity.

But his parents, Gyanendra and Komal, also deserve some compassion. Gyanendra became king very young, and lost the throne. He lost his family in the palace killings, which he was blamed for. He became king again, and inherited all his brother's

wealth. Soon after, he lost his people's respect, he lost the throne again, he lost the monarchy, and he lost all the wealth inherited from his brother. And we've seen what has become of his only son.

All this time, he never lost patience, he remained decent and civilised. He was smiling when he left Narayanhiti Palace. He was never crude. What surprises me is, where were all those qualities when he was king? That's why I call him the 'unroyal king/royal ex-king'. Like a lot of commentators, I think Paras needs help, not contempt. Those who still detest him must understand: we are all human, as are our families and relatives; who knows what crises we may have to face in the future?





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# Have a blast

One of the indicators that Nepal's economy is on the mend is the phenomenal growth in recent years of this country's advertising industry.

And thank heavens for that, because this week's column would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of Crackpot Cheeseballs (Tagline: 'Do you have the balls?'). This space is also made possible through the kind support of Altitude Vodka (Jingle: 'Get high with Altitude, My Nepal my Altitude').

So, without beating the bush and without further do-do, let's get down to the Annual Advertising Excellence Hall of Fame Awards 2014 (Motto: 'The Medium Is the Massage'). It goes without saying that was it not for the ad industry, we in the journalism business, wouldn't be here to fulfill our public service duty of ramming our opinions down your throats.

Nepal's advertising industry now ranks right up there with the world's most advanced to sell fast-moving consumer goods even faster. In fact, these products are moving so fast, we have no time to loaf around. (This last sentence was sponsored by Sagarmatha Loaf: 'You Got the Dough? We Got the Bread.')

Now, before we announce the winners of this year's Ad Awards, a short commercial break to announce that this week's Ass column comes with a special promo offer: 'First person to read this piece right to the end, gets a free diamond-studded tiara. Fine print: Lots of conditions apply. Offer valid till stocks last. Strictly on first-come-first-serve basis. Management can disqualify entrants without giving any reason whatsoever. In short, this is just a ploy to get suckers like you who have nothing better to do to actually read this stuff.'

**No-Itch Anti-Eczema Lotion**  
'Special Scratch Offer. Scrape this sticker and win a free trip to Disneyland.'



**Sloth Beer Grand Post-Dasain Promo**  
'Drink all you can to be the lucky winner of a college scholarship, and pass out.'

**Mt Everest Iron Rods**  
'Don't Stay Home Without It. Buy a 50 ton gift pack, and win a free mountain flight for two on Hot Air'.

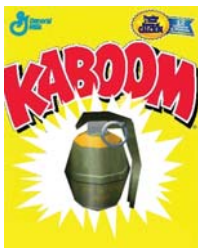


**E-coli Mineral Water**  
'Bottled at source from a tap in Tinkune and fortified with micro-organic nutrients. This two-in-one product allows you to quench your thirst and lose weight simultaneously. Satisfaction guaranteed, or your money back'.

**Housewife Cooking Oil**



The cooking oil that all Nepali housewives swear by. (Actual housewife quote: "@#\$%&\*?!") Move from the fire into the frying pan with Housewife. Good for the Heart, Bad for Everything Else.



**ShockaLocka Boom! Grenades**  
Just Arrived! Fresh Chinese grenades for Tihar. This Diwali, have a blast.

Make a bigger boom than your neighbours. Buy one get two free. Offer valid while stockist still alive. Pull Pin and Throw (grenade, not pin).


**BODY BUILDER Portland Cement**  
Made from pure imported klinker and nothing else.

 No domestic additives. Get concrete results with Body Builder Brand Cement and live to tell the tale.

**MI-17LX Helicopter Gunship**  
It's sophisticated, it's seductive and it's just \$4.5 million. Drop-dead good looks, the all new MI-17LX is so ultra-cool it's hot. Enhanced with elegant turret-mounted rocket pods, equipped with chic side-firing machine guns, stylish night-vision goggles and sporty 3G ejection seats. Make even your enemy envious!



**POODLE Instant Noodles**  
Oodles of Noodles with Essence of Goat

 Just when you thought Nepal had run out of instant noodle brands, here comes Poodle Noodle. Don't be fooled by the name, Poodle is actually the country's first he-goat flavoured noodle especially synthesised for the Nepali taste.

**POOF! Vanishing Cream**  
Finally here: the skin-lightening ointment that you've all been waiting for. Apply twice a day after meals. Get paler faster than the competition. Beware of imitations. Now you see me, now you don't.

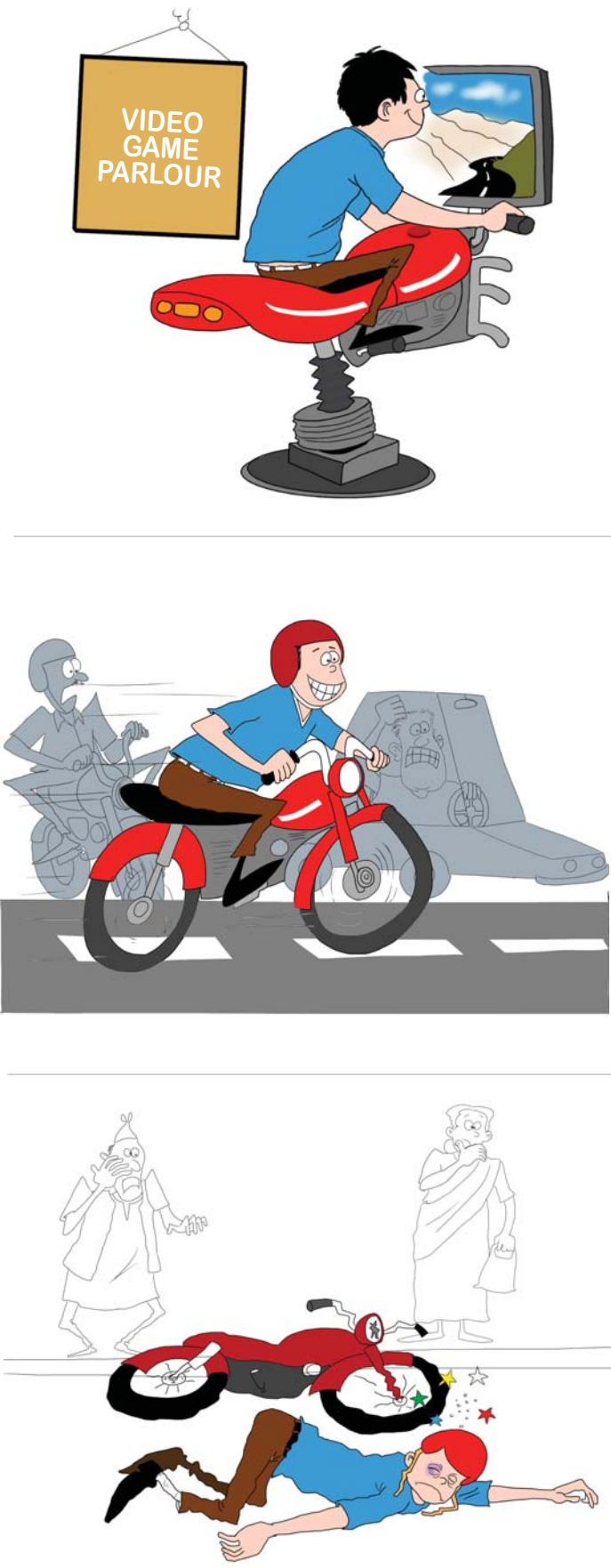




The Ass

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