



# Three-fourths of the sky

Every day should be International Women’s Day in Nepal, not just 8 March because there is much left to do for gender parity. Of the two dozen ministers in the coalition cabinet only two are women. Only about 15 per cent of the teachers in Nepal’s high schools are female. At last count, just 13 per cent of the membership of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists were women. But the most glaring example of structural gender exclusion is the refusal of some lawmakers to allow citizenship in the name of the mother.



CYNTHIA CHOO



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## 5-STAR MANAGERS



Interviews with **Sinead O'Reilly** at the Hyatt, and **Janet Fitzner** at the Radisson.

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BIKRAM RAI

Ashna Acharya is in the cockpit of a Buddha Air ATR 42, and ready for take off.

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# STANDING ABOVE THE CROWD

## INTERVIEWS



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## PROFILES



**Sareena Rai** is the vocalist of anarcho-punk band, Yuva Ekta.

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**Nilisha Dangol Shrestha** and **Pawana Shrestha** are senior executives at Etihad Airways.

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## THREE-FOURTHS OF THE SKY

Combine Nepal's youth bulge with the statistics on migration, and you come up with a dramatic figure: nearly half the young men of this country are working abroad leaving many villages with only women, children and the elderly.

This male exodus is not a new phenomenon, but the scale of migration today surpasses anything we have seen in our recent history -- except perhaps during the mass recruitment of 'martial tribes' into the British Army during the world wars which emptied Gurung, Magar, Rai and Limbu villages in central and eastern Nepal of their men.

Nepal's biggest item of export over the last centuries has been its young men. Demographers worry about the 'missing women' in the population statistics for China and India because of the preference for boys among parents. In Nepal, we now have to worry about our 'missing men'.

The gender imbalance has many consequences, from a shortage of farm hands and construction labour, to increased domestic violence in families which suffer long periods of separation. Worryingly, there has been a sharp rise in the number of women also migrating to the Gulf and India and this has increased the number of cases of abuse and exploitation.

On the plus side, the 4.5 million or so Nepali contract workers in India, the Gulf states, Malaysia, Japan and Korea send

## Every day should be International Women's Day

home \$5 billion annually, saving the Nepali economy from collapse. The other, less studied, aspect of male migration is that households and community groups in rural Nepal today are being run mostly by women. This may be why, despite a dysfunctional government, there is still some development going on and there has been steady improvement in health and education. For instance, the number of girls sitting for SLC examinations has overtaken the number of boys for the first time this year.

With the men gone, women have more of a say in school management committees, forestry user groups, irrigation committees, village development councils. Women have had to take on jobs traditionally done by men, and while this has increased their responsibilities it has also given them more say than they had previously.

One of the main reasons for Nepal's underdevelopment has been its culturally-sanctioned gender discrimination. The districts with the best performance in child and maternal survival rates are those with the highest rates of female literacy, and where caste and other forms of discrimination are least entrenched. There is a direct correlation between female literacy and Nepal's dramatic

progress in reducing maternal and child mortality in the past 15 years.

But what we can see is that although there has been quantitative progress in education, we lag behind in quality. Most children can now read and write, but what they learn doesn't seem to be leading to more balanced gender relations in this patriarchal and culturally conservative society. The average age of marriage for girls has gone up by two years to 18, but child marriages are still rampant. Violence against women is tragically common as recent cases of child rape, immolation of daughters-in-law, and acid attacks on students have shown.

The most glaring example of structural gender exclusion is the refusal of some lawmakers to allow citizenship in the name of the mother (*See Anjana Rajbhandary's story on page 6*). The other is the inability or unwillingness of Nepal's powerful to comprehend just how serious the imbalance in the country's gender representation is. Look at any photograph of the top leaders, and they are all elderly Brahmin men. Of the two dozen ministers in the coalition cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, only two are women. Only about 15 per cent of the teachers in Nepal's high schools are female. At last count, just 13 per cent of the membership of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists were women.

Even the Maoist party, which claims to be inspired by Chairman Mao seems to have forgotten his most famous quote: "Women hold up half the sky." Although women made up more than one-third of the Maoist guerrilla force during the insurgency, today what remains of the UCPN(M) Central Committee is dominated by male comrades.

It shouldn't just be March 8 that should be marked as International Women's Day in Nepal. And we shouldn't be giving women a token holiday on this day. The day should be marked by striving even harder for gender equality in the home and workplace. Every day should be International Women's Day.



DIMA KAR CHETTRI

YOUR SAY  
www.nepalitimes.com

## AGITATED STATE

The editorial's too soft on a government that has proved itself hopelessly inadequate - there is much to be done, constitution or not ('In an agitated state', Editorial, #747).

David Seddon

■ Some so-called analysts have made up their minds about opposing every bit of Maoist activities. They are the cause of conflict.

Samundra Pathak

■ Just because people are used to seeing agitators with bladed weapons doesn't mean an environment of terror doesn't exist.

Nirmal Ghimire

■ This is what you get for continuing to trump up a group -- Maoists -- that have lost all morals and public support.

Sagar Ruptse

■ So finally the people display a level of maturity, which their leaders lack ('Not yet boiling point', Navin Jha, #747). Wonders never cease, even in Nepal.

Namah

■ We have been waiting for a constitution for over eight years now ('Tables turned', Anurag Acharya, #747). Why are the people not angry at this self-centered and ego maniacs of leaders who continue to dupe common Nepalis in the name of consensus? It's time we replace

these useless politicians with new ones.

Mahesh

## TWITTERSPHERE

An important finding to me is that so-called civil society leaders do not interact with civil society ('Political geography of Nepal's Twittersphere', Bibek Paudel, #747). Bit sad, isn't it?

Suman Khadka

■ Red fights oppression via racism. Have they been through their posts? If they call themselves unbiased, it's time they get real and start by criticising the Maoists for once. Not even god is perfect. These people, who even see vandalism of CA property as a revolutionary act, are hopeless.

Real Deal

■ Trying to portray who's what through their retweets is not only less objective but too simplistic of a measure in front of such a complex issue.

NG

■ It is not surprising that the self-appointed and West-anointed 'leaders' are rightfully ignored by the civil society they purport to represent.

G Funk

## TRASH TO CASH

Good! But success will depend on how it will be different to the "methodology" we have in place right now ('Rupees from rubbish', Sahina Shrestha, #747). The most challenging task here is to change the Nepali lifestyle into becoming more environmentally friendly.

Nirmal

■ Wasn't there some foreign private company looking to invest in electricity generation from waste sometime ago?

Rohit H.Rai

## EVEREST AVALANCHE

Only means the World's highest mountain is not going to be overcrowded ('Aftershocks of the Everest avalanche', Om Astha Rai, #747). That's something to be happy about. And, besides assuming it won't be a big drop, 150-200 foreign climbers and about 250 Sherpas will be enough for a single season. There are other 8000ers and trekking activities for Sherpas.

Chhabi R. Pokhrel

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Among the most important constitutional issues as the CPDCC once again gears up for the consensus on vital provisions in the new constitution is the model of judiciary too. The contentious sticking points seem to be over whether the judiciary should be under the purview of the Parliament and whether the Parliament (not Supreme Court) should be the final interpreter of the constitution.

The debate over the proposal of Maoist on putting the judiciary under the parliamentary control is a no-brainer. In the nascent Nepali democracy, should the Parliament control the decision-making of the judiciary?

Also, the Maoist proposal of making a special parliamentary committee the final arbiter in the interpretation of the constitution is equally problematic. Both of these proposals violate the

fundamental democratic tenets of check and balance and also the separation of power.

It doesn't mean that all proposals made by the Maoists concerning the judiciary on new constitution are invalid. They do have a point when they say that the judiciary needs some radical reforms. The Parliament must have the constitutional right to summon any public office bearer for questionable decisions.

There's a need to make the judiciary more inclusive and accountable to the Parliament. That's why the middle way solution proposed by UML, whereby provisions will be made for impeachment of judicial nominee by 60 per cent of the members of Parliament, isn't a bad option although the more ideal would be requirement of a two-third majority.

The parliamentary vetting process needs to be tightened too, with those on the parliamentary vetting panel enjoying independent right to either accept or reject the judicial nominee. Trickier is the distribution of rights and jurisdiction between federal and provincial courts. There should be maximum autonomy for provincial courts except on matters with a direct bearing on people's sovereignty and national integrity. Political parties need to come around to a more democratic and logical consensus over the judiciary on the new constitution.

Anil Karki

## Times

## THIS WEEK



BIKRAM RAI (30 LIKES)

**Most liked and shared on Facebook**  
Turkish Airbus 330 remains with its nose on the ground off the runway.

## Most popular on Twitter

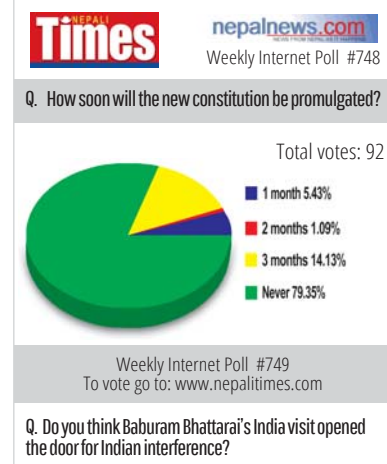
In an agitated state, Editorial (14 retweets, 8 favourites)

## Most visited online page

Political geography of Nepal's Twittersphere by Bibek Paudel (1047 views)

## Most commented

Political geography of Nepal's Twittersphere by Bibek Paudel (18 comments)





# Us and them

How to play dirty politics and call it an identity struggle

We are getting a lesson on how democracy works from the Maoists. Election results are mere “mathematics”, and the attempt to put disputed issues in the constitution to the vote is just a “numbers game”. The mandate of the revolution is more important than electoral mandate, etc etc.



**THE DEADLINE**  
Damakant Jayshi

If the UCPN (Maoist) and the Madhesi *Morcha* think that busing in their cadre from all over the country to the confines of the Open Theatre in Kathmandu is a show of democracy they should beware: the UML has a far bigger party organisation and can truck in an even larger mass as a “show of force,” if that is what we are talking about.

In the name of equality and rights of all faiths it has been rightly argued that the Nepali state should not be associated with any religion. A Hindu Nepal will not be inclusive, agreed. But how is a Nepal restructured as federal units in name of select ethnic groups be inclusive, pray?



BIKRAM RAI

Nepal has 123 ethnic groups and 93 languages at last count, how many of these are marginalised? And who decides how marginal you have to be in order to have your own federal state?

Why should only Limbus, Tamangs and Newars have their own states? According to Census 2001, there were 686,000 Gurungs or 2.39% of the population and Muslims 971,056 or 4.2%. Is it inclusive to propose a Gurung state but not one for Muslims?

Similarly, the population of Dalits scattered across the country is in the double digits. They do not have a state but the

CA committee named a state after the Magar (7%), Tamang (5.5%), Newar (5.4%) and Limbu (1.58%), among others. Aren’t Dalits and Muslims marginalised in this country?

Let’s face it. This was never about identity, or for that matter, about the number of states. Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said his alliance would accept a fewer number of states, six to be precise, if the states are carved and named on the basis of ethnicity. If they are not, then he will accept no less than nine states. What is the rationale behind this?

Basing the names and boundaries of future states

according to ethnicity is dangerous business. But then, our selfish politicians will go for it because they can play divide and rule, and come out on top. You sow seeds of “us” and “them” about federal boundaries, dividing up rivers and forests and where is it all going to end?

We have had wake-up calls on this. During the tension-filled days of debate on federalism in the first half of 2012, there were ethnic clashes in Ilam over forestry products. In the Far West there have been clashes over dividing up the region. This is not “fear-mongering” by

“status-quoists” out to “protect their privileges”.


It is easy to shout about inclusiveness and rights of the marginalised in Kathmandu and New Delhi. But it came to the nitty gritty last week about nominating candidates for vacant positions of constitutional bodies, parties that are not supposed to be in speaking terms-- all came together to propose the Mainalis and Jhas unanimously.

Have a close look at the executive bodies of the parties, including the revolutionary ones, that take all the important decisions? How inclusive are they? How many women and Dalits, for example, are in the decision-making positions? But this does not prevent our politicians from indulging in hypocrisy on the streets of Kathmandu and in the corridors of power in New Delhi, where you visit asking for “Indian friends” intervention.

It is indeed imperative to put in place a system which ensures representation of marginalised communities. Historical discrimination of many communities is real. However, it won’t end in a day and it is not going to end just by naming or carving states in a particular way, without first putting effective decentralisation in place of decision-making of political parties and the state apparatus.


Guided by electoral politics and nursing chief ministerial and presidential ambitions and then pretending to fight for the rights of the marginalised people will not ensure Nepal’s future prosperity. 🇳🇵 @damakant

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# Women in business and leadership roles

Yasmin Darwich is the newly-elected president of Business and Professional Women (BPW) International, and calls herself a “Mexican mother, doctor, advocate”. She was in Kathmandu last week for BPW’s first South Asian sub-regional meeting.

**Nepali Times: Can you introduce Business and Professional Women to our readers?**

**Yasmin Darwich:** BPW International is in 100 countries and five continents and we divide up some of the regions depending on the number of affiliates we have. For instance the Asia-Pacific in this case has five sub-regions, including South Asia. So this way we can cover the similar interests of the affiliates because it’s never the same when you’re talking about women’s problems or goals in Nepal or Australia. And we have chosen Kathmandu for our first South Asian sub-regional meeting in recognition of the great work being done here by Ambica Shrestha and the BPW team. We always put BPW Nepal as an example to other regions, how they accomplished all these amazing projects in the country, how they support hundreds of women in Nepal.

**What is the main mission of Business and Professional Women?**

Well our main mission is to empower women and train them and support them in business and profession so we can raise their capacity for entrepreneurship. Sometimes people think because we are an organisation for women we are radical feminists or anti-men. No such thing. We work to try to reduce inequality. We have consultant status of the UN’s ECOSOC with whom we have a global compact and a campaign called ‘He for She’. Our partners therefore are governments, our affiliates, civil society and the UN. We concentrate in education so that we raise a new generation with open minds about how women and men can change the world together. We also have a special program in Business and Professional Women for young women 18-30, who do not have it easy because they also have the second or the third job to be a good mother, a good wife, run the house as well as the business. Usually when women are in charge, it is not easy for them because men are not sharing the responsibilities.

**So it is not just about educating girls, but also boys so that they grow to share responsibilities.**

Exactly. We also have to be very honest who brings up the kids, it is usually the mother. She may be reinforcing the stereotypes by telling her daughter you can have your food only after your brother. Human beings are traditional, we do what our grandparents and parents did. As a gynaecologist by profession, I see this all the time, and these things must change.

**Besides education, which are your focus areas?**

The thing that makes BPW International totally different from other women’s organisations is in our name: we are business and we are professional. We are the only one in the world with that combination. We think and act locally, nationally and internationally, we network, mentor and lobby to develop the professional business leadership potential of all women. Affiliates can also work on various sectors, like environment. For example, in Latin America we have the ‘Tree Is Life’ campaign and planted five million trees in Brazil. We train our members how to be more involved in our issues, how to be a leader, how to be more self confident because sometimes, women have all the education, they have degrees, they have money and everything, but what happens when we start to go outside our comfort zone? BPW International is the best university ever to teach women how to work as a team and help each other.

**What were the main decisions you took at the Kathmandu conference?**

This was the first sub-regional meeting and we discussed how South Asian women could work together. We need to know what experience and advice we can share within the region with our new sisterhood.



KENJI KWOK

## Not about charity

Marcia H Rioux is Research Professor at York University in Toronto, where she is affiliated with Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI). She was recently in Kathmandu to meet with private sector employers, and to discuss how to promote access to opportunities in the labour force for people with disabilities. Excerpts from her conversation with Ashutosh Tiwari:

**Nepali Times: How did you get involved with the Nepali private sector employers to hire people with disabilities?**

**Marcia H. Rioux:** We have a global project that looks at disability rights from the lens of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Within that broader scope of monitoring rights, we thought it would be interesting to look at a specific theme, poverty and employment, which are two major issues facing people with disabilities.

We chose to work in Nepal because a regional program on rights that we conducted with National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal (NFDN) showed that there was already a lot of cross-disability work -- an existing organisational environment for people with various disabilities to come and work together on a common platform -- going on here. To that, we thought we would add scope, capacity, themes and technical skills so that there would be a wider awareness about disability rights being like any other movement.

**Given Nepal’s demography, employers can easily fill positions with the available pool of regular job applicants. Do they then not balk at the prospect of hiring people with disabilities?**

Employers are reluctant to hire people with disabilities. Most of them have no experience and no understanding. Some of them try, but fail. Earlier, we used to train people with disabilities to look for jobs. But when those jobs did not work out, they lost courage, confidence and motivation. We then learnt that we needed to work closely with the employers too.

In Nepal’s case, there is a huge out-migration of people, which reduces the number of available employees. As such, workers with disabilities are more likely to provide a stable labour market. From the meetings I’ve had with Nepali businesses, it’s clear that they know this but need assistance.

Hence, through our Nepal outreach work, we will work with them on issues related to recruiting and training, workplace safety, performance and productivity, and general adaptation.

**The act of hiring people with disabilities is seen to be closer to doing charity than running a business. Is there a business case to be made here?**

The business case is obvious. You change your consumer market. Businesses have long gone after women, children, the elderly, the ethnic minorities and so on. But people with disabilities remain the largest untapped market that’s available to businesses. From studies, we know that people with disabilities always go to companies and businesses that are disable-friendly, both as employees and customers.

Take the case of this barbecue restaurant (Baje Ko Sekuwa in Battispatali). Because a customer who uses wheelchair asked them to put in a ramp for his wedding reception, they saw a consumer market they did not notice before and they complied. For a minimal cost, this restaurant is likely to increase its business.

For other Nepali companies that do businesses globally, letting your buyers know that you have progressive employment practices, which include hiring employees or serving customers with disabilities, makes them more likely to source goods and services from you.

**You’ve visited a few companies. What are some of the examples you’ve seen of Nepali businesses’ hiring people with disabilities?**

We saw that the pharmaceutical company, Deurali Janata has hired 15 people with disabilities. Most of them come from the surrounding community. This has addressed two problems -- employment and transport-- while strengthening the company’s ties to local communities. The company has also hired a sign language interpreter who helps the disabled workers understand instructions and attend meetings. Bakery Café chains have long been famous for employing many people with disabilities. Four Season Travel and Tours is working with tourism product developers and with consumers with disabilities abroad to make Nepal their travel destination.

These examples are neither about charity nor corporate social responsibility. The people with disabilities hired at or served by those companies form the core part of the business.



SONIA AWALE



# FIVE STAR MANAGERS



In October last year Irish Sinead O'Reilly (*above*) was appointed the general manager of Hyatt Regency. Last week German Janet Fitzner (*below*) joined Radisson Hotel Kathmandu in the same position. *Nepali Times* asked Fitzner and O'Reilly what advice they have for young women aspiring to break the glass ceiling.

**Nepali Times: Did you ever feel that you had to work extra hard to prove your capabilities to superiors because you are a woman?**  
**Janet Fitzner:** I don't recall being denied opportunities because I am a woman. I was fortunate to have mentors who were always supportive of my ambitions. But, I have felt sometimes women need to be empowered to feel they can aspire to the top positions when they work in a male dominated industry  
**Sinead O'Reilly:** Honestly speaking no, I have been lucky to work with previous general managers who actually believed females were equally productive and proactive as male counterparts.

**What do you like the most about your job?**  
**Fitzner:** Running a successful hotel requires a great deal of teamwork. I enjoy bringing together different strengths of people from different backgrounds in order to achieve a common commercial goal; service excellence. I also enjoy the diversity of the job.  
**O'Reilly:** The fact that no day is ever the same, you can never say you are bored, and you come across new challenges. Also, the fact that you meet so many people from all around the world and it is a joy to see their happiness when we as a team contribute to their vacation or business experience.

**Is this what you always saw yourself doing?**  
**Fitzner:** Yes. I have a passion for the hospitality business that ignited when I started my career in hospitality as a trainee. My mother actually wanted me to become a banker or a teacher because she didn't want me working long hours. I was, however, determined to pursue my goals, and I worked my way up to eventually take on the role of general manager.

**How do you want guests to feel when they stay at your hotel?**  
**O'Reilly:** I want our guests to feel that they are enjoying a "memorable experience" and feeling the "authentic hospitality" that we as Hyatt Regency Kathmandu wish to extend to our all guests.

**Women still remain under-represented in most senior and leadership roles and there are only few female general managers of hotels. Why do you think is the case?**  
**Fitzner:** Like any other industry, the hospitality industry is male dominated but this is slowly changing. If we look at Radisson in Kathmandu, the male to female ratio in management sector is very good. We already have 30 per cent women working in the management sector, which I believe is a very good ratio. That's the ratio we want to achieve all over Radisson. Last year we started a program which aims to double women in leadership positions by 2016 at all Radisson Hotels.  
**O'Reilly:** As with many industries, the hospitality sector too has few women in leadership roles. In many cases, this scenario could arise out of equal opportunities not being made available and some form of discrimination being prevalent in certain society. This is further escalated when there is a perception that women unlike men will not be able to devote their full time and energy due to family constraints. Furthermore, I believe a network of likeminded women leaders are limited who can guide and assist other women aspiring to take on leadership roles.

**What is your personal philosophy?**  
**Fitzner:** To work hard, never give up and always maintain a fighting spirit, and most importantly to do things with integrity and passion.

**Any advice for young women who aspire for the top job in the hotel business?**  
**Fitzner:** First of all, believe in yourself. We have a motto at Radisson, which says "Yes I can". Secondly, take your education and training very seriously, and never stop learning. Also, don't give up. You will find that all successful business people (men and women) have encountered obstacles and difficulties in their journey to the top. The ones who make it are the ones who did not give up. As a final note, be creative and innovative, as the world and the workplace is constantly evolving, so being adaptable is very important.  
**O'Reilly:** Work hard and achieve the results and be knowledgeable in at least two industry disciplines: sales, operations for example.

## prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

### Double fun

Qatar Airways has doubled the number of movies and TV shows to offer more than 2000 choices in its onboard entertainment. Passengers travelling during March will also be able to enjoy a lineup of Oscar-winning movies and latest seasons of hit dramas.



### Festive goodies

Pashupati Paints handed over prizes to the winners of its festive contest held between 17 August to 17 October 2014. The bumper prize- a Royal Enfield motorbike- was given to Dhurba Khanal, while four other winners received Mahindra Rodeo Scooter and 40 winners won a roundtrip ticket to Bangkok.



### New branch

Prabhu Bank has opened a new branch in Gorkha. The new branch replaces the bank's branch at Dhading Besi. Customers at Dhading Besi will be served by the existing branch of Kist Bank.



### Cook smart

EOL, the sole authorised distributor of Godrej appliance in Nepal has introduced Godrej Pizza and Kebab Maker Microwave Oven. The oven is a perfect blend of style and technology.

### High definition

Subisu Digital Cable TV has added three new HD channels: Nat. Geo Wild, Nat. Geo People and Fox Life to their HD channel lineup. Customers of Clear TV can now enjoy nine HD channels.



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Since I was first hit by a balloon on my way to school 12 years ago, I have always dreaded the week before the Holi festival. If it weren't for the rain that doused pre-Holi terrorism this week, I would have reached work, drenched, multiple times.



**COMMENT**  
Tsering Dolker Gurung

For the first few Holis, my defence tactic was to just ignore, and walk away. After all, that was what my mother taught me. Every time I came home, angry at having been hit by a water balloon, she'd say: "There's no point arguing with losers. They'll never stop."

I thought she was right, so whenever I saw a kid, a boy, a man with hands hidden behind his back, I'd run as fast as I could, and duck when the missiles whizzed past me.

But it was after high school that I really began to question this method of saving myself from being hit. It wasn't me who was in the wrong, so why was I running? I decided then that I would not let a hooligan who took pleasure in throwing water (and eggs and tomatoes) at strangers keep me from going about my life. If they felt it was their right to stand on the street and abuse passers-by, I



# Living in fear

Women are taught to be fearful and shameful for things they have no say in

too had the right to walk the same streets without getting harassed.

The first time I decided to shout back at a kid, whose water balloon hit my butt right on target I was a bit nervous about confronting him. Even though I had a few years and inches over the little guy, a part of me was fearful that his 'gang' of friends

would retaliate with verbal abuse which would only embarrass me. He slunk away.

Since then, I give earfuls to strangers who catcall me, or tell off those man-spreading in a crowded bus, or give a sting eye to someone whose eyes are glued to my chest. But when incidents like the horrific acid attack on

two teenage girls last month happen, the fear returns. Especially because the culprit is still free.

My friends and I often discuss how unfair it is that a male friend can easily set off on a solo adventure in the middle of the night when we'd have to think a thousand times before doing the same, and in the end concluding our safety is more important than an impromptu getaway.

Last month, on a trip to India, determined to check off as many 'must-see places' on our list, my girlfriend and I decided to start at the Taj Mahal. We were driven



to Agra in a rented car we shared with two American journalists who we met at our hotel.

The driver was chatty and entertained us with jokes. Then he began to talk about the Delhi Uber Cab rape case, questioning the victim's credibility. "Why did she take so long to file the complaint?" he asked, accusing the woman of being bribed by rival cab companies. The camaraderie he shared with the culprit who was in the same profession made him unable to see the outrageousness of his remarks.

We met our second female-shaming hypocrite, an elderly man, on a bus to Jaipur. My friend's loud laughter bothered him, prompting him to suggest she not laugh like that in India because people would think she was "loose", but he didn't miss out on touching her leg every opportunity he got.

Having to carry a rock and a pepper spray in our purses for the duration of our trip was standard operating procedure – an indication of just how unsafe it feels to be female in India, or anywhere in the world.

As I write this comes news of the Delhi bus rapist Mukesh Singh telling the BBC that his victim was to blame for being out so late. He added: "If she hadn't decided to fight back, we would have let her go."

Singh's comments may have generated wide backlash and outrage on social media but he is not the only one with such repulsive views. And, that's what makes the world a lot less safe for women. 🇮🇳

*@Chenreeryang*



# नागरिक

## नागरिक दैनिकसँग अब छ १ लाख जना SUBSCRIBERS... र यो क्रम अमरै जारी छ

### आफ्नो स्थापनाको ६ वर्ष नपुग्दै ६ अंकको गौरवशाली ग्राहक सदस्यता हासिल गर्न सफल भएको खुशी हामी यहाँहरू सबैसँग बाँड्न चाहन्छौं ।

**तोकः** माथि चल्ने **SUBSCRIBER** सेर्योना **सँदाप** **सेर**सँबाद **खरेत** **ताँ** हुने **आह**करको **सं**सं **स**नेवाहे **उ**तरिको **वे** ।





She adds: "When I first started working it involved a lot of heavy lifting and climbing ladders. Some colleagues would ask me why wouldn't I just stick to a desk job. But once they got to know me, the questions stopped." 





CYNTHIA CHOO

**O**n the coffee table of the Etihad Airways office in Kathmandu is a business magazine addressed to General Manager 'Mr Pawana Shrestha'. In the GM's office, busy juggling between two computers and a smartphone, however, is a woman.

At 31, Pawana Shrestha is the youngest and only female Nepali country manager of an international airline in South Asia. Yet, this hasn't stopped her from being mistaken for a guy.

"Although more women are joining the aviation industry, their number at managerial level remains low," she says.

According to the 2014 Tourism Employment Survey men make up an overwhelming 83 per cent of the workforce among international airlines in Nepal, while women constitute only 17 per cent.

Shrestha however doesn't think of it as being a disadvantage. "When there is a female executive, people sit up and pay attention," she says. "They listen to what you have to say."

But she says women first need to be confident of their abilities, speak up and have ambition. Shrestha started her career at 16, working behind the ticketing counter at Gulf Air, before joining college where she studied Management and Rural Development.

"I never compared myself to men, I just focused on what I could do, and how I could



## In the driver's seat



PICS: KENJI KWOK

**T**he big green Sajha Yatayat bus makes its way through Kathmandu's busy traffic, making heads turn. At a zebra crossing, pedestrians stop to stare. Passersby squint at the driver.

In a bright pink jacket, a high bun and dark sunglasses, Rebika Thapa (*pic, right*) does look striking. She is the only female driver not just in Sajha, but also the only woman driving heavy buses in Nepal.

"It wasn't my childhood dream to be a bus driver, but circumstances in my life put me in the driver's seat," says Thapa who had been driving electric three-wheelers and vans for a travel agency on the Pokhara route for 11 years.

She applied when the newly-revived Sajha had a vacancy two years ago, but recruiters at Suvidha Sewa assumed she wouldn't be able to drive Sajha's heavy Tata buses.

"A lot of men who had applied after me had got the job, but I wasn't even contacted," Thapa recalls. "I told them to take my trial again if they wanted to."

After a route test, Thapa was hired a year ago. She acknowledges that there are differences between how male and female drivers are treated (she had to give a route test whereas male drivers could start driving right away) but she is grateful for the opportunity.

She still remembers what her manager at Sajha told her the day she was hired: "You didn't get the job because you are a woman, you got it because of your ability."

Says Thapa: "That has stayed with me throughout this past year, and I always remember it when I am behind the steering wheel."

As a familiar face on the route she drives, Thapa says passengers often come up to chat, and traffic policewomen greet her. She says she personally has not been treated differently just because she is a woman. Her support system extends beyond her supervisors and colleagues at Sajha Yatayat to her only son.

"When my son's teachers talk about what I do, my son feels proud of me. I don't feel bad that



I am a driver because if I hadn't done this job, I would not have been able to educate and raise him," says the single mother.

Besides Thapa, the bus crew today includes conductor Sirjana Nepal (*pic, above*) who left her teaching job in Sindhupalchok to

**DRIVING TO WORK:** Sajha bus driver Rebika Thapa (*left*) and conductor Sirjana Nepal often work together on the same route.

become a conductor in Sajha with her husband. The couple work the same position in alternate shifts while raising their two children together.

Passengers are used to loud, and often rude, young male conductors on microbuses. Nepal is polite, but firm, as she calls out for passengers and gets the bus moving between stops.

Both Thapa and Nepal have endured bemused looks and snide comments. Pedestrians sometimes

take pictures of them from the sidewalks, or motorcyclists try to chat them up at traffic lights.

"There are a few times when some passengers are impatient and use foul language, but that is rare," says Nepal.

Both Thapa and Nepal are often on duty together and feel that working alongside other women makes them more comfortable, and it is easier to develop a bond.

As she brings her bus to a halt at the Lagankhel terminal, Thapa says: "I hope more women will join Sajha, we have to stand up on our own feet and work independently to motivate other women." 🇳🇵

Ayesha Shakya



top



KENJI KWOK

**WHO'S WHO:** All senior executives at Etihad's Kathmandu office are women (*from left to right*) Samina Banu, Nilisha Dangol Shrestha, Pawana Shrestha, Sarita Jha and Geeta Bista.

better myself," she says. This positive outlook is the reason she says she has never felt any discrimination at the workplace.

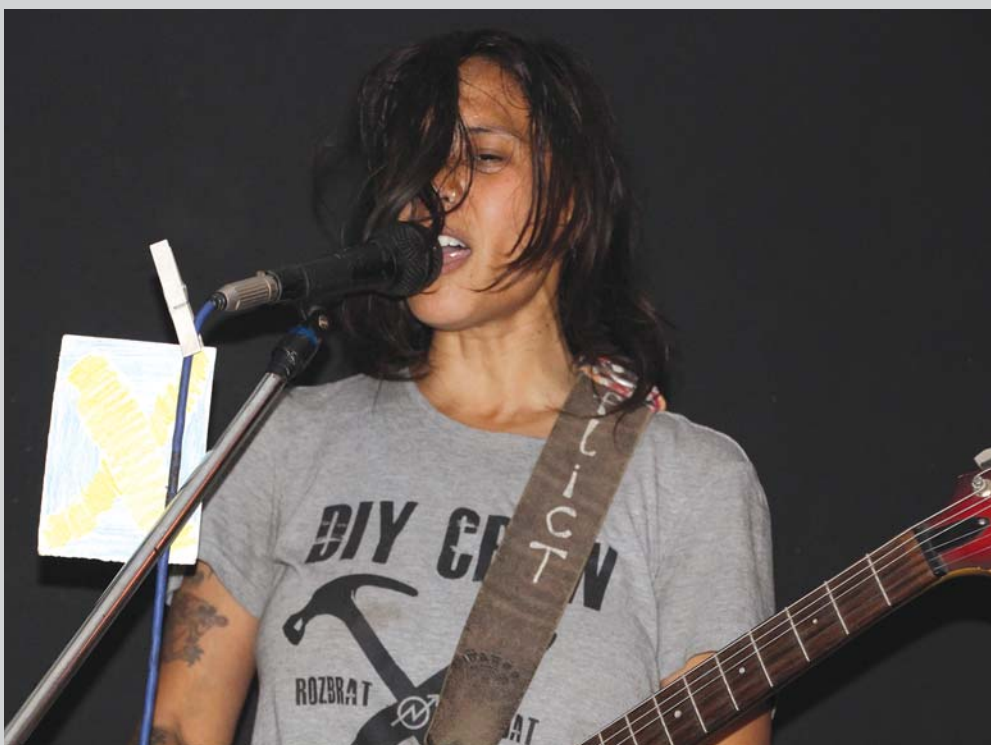
The Etihad Kathmandu office has predominantly women executives. Besides Shrestha, there are Sales Account Manager Sarita Jha, Guest Support Coordinator Nilisha Dangol Shrestha and Sales Support Administrator Samina Banu.

Although all the women say there is no sense of discrimination in the aviation business, they have been at the receiving end of humiliating remarks and discouragement from men in previous jobs.

"I've been told that I could not do my job because it's unsuitable for a woman to go out to meet people and negotiate sales deals," says Sarita Jha, "people say both men and women are equal, but in reality we are not."

Jha is comfortable working in an office with mostly women. "I feel proud working here, it's easy for us to understand each other's problems and help each other during difficult times," she says.

Nilisha Dangol Shrestha says the camaraderie and teamwork helps the office perform better. She says: "Support from colleagues and family is the most important to stay positive." 🇳🇵



MARISA SARNOFF

## Self-made punkette

Looking at live musical acts in Kathmandu, it is no surprise that the rock scene is dominated by men. But one woman is trying to find her place in this masculine music mileu.

Sareena Rai (*pic, above*) is the vocalist of anarcho-punk band, Rai Ko Ris ("Rai Anger" in Nepali). This talented musician has also played in various other bands.

The prefix 'DIY' (Do It Yourself) has been an integral part of all the bands she has been associated with. This description perfectly fits her perception of music and life in general. For her, people have to remain true to themselves. "A lot of women, and even men, don't question their conditioning," she says. "I choose to resist this conditioning."

Rai has often been called a feminist, but she doesn't like to be put in a box. "I'd rather call myself an anarcho-feminist," she says, "I hate any kind of injustice, not only towards women."

In a 10m<sup>2</sup> practice room with her

current band, Yuva Ekta, she suddenly seems more alive as they play *Asamanta* ('Unequality' in Nepali). "Sometimes you have to push yourself harder just because of your age, gender or sexual preference," she adds.

Rai didn't get into music for fame. But in her own unique way, she has been contributing to Nepali music for the past 20 years. Rai is active in the anarchist punk scene because that is where women are most encouraged to play music.

Ganga Rai Benzenkaar, Yuva Ekta's guitarist, is a powerful example of the emancipation. "She came to Kathmandu from her village with only Rs 500 and a knife in her pocket," says Rai, "today she is a guitarist in a punk band."

Rai wishes there could be more interesting stories like Ganga's. She believes that if rock music has mostly been men's affair, it's because they've had more freedom than women. She comments: "I got used to it, but honestly it sucks." 🇳🇵

Stéphane Huët

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**La.Lit 4.0,**  
Launch of the literary magazine's fourth volume.  
7 March, 12pm to 4pm,  
The Yellow House, Sanepa,  
editor@lalitmag.com, www.lalitmag.com

**Women's Day,**  
Women entrepreneurs exhibit merchandise produced by Nepali women.  
7 March, 10am to 6pm, International Club, Sanepa, (01)4222340, 9841411384, fwean.info@gmail.com, www.fwean.org.np

**Astitva,**  
A slam poetry event by Word Warriors, in collaboration with Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD).  
8 March, 4pm to 6pm, Patan Darbar Square, 9841444787

**Farmer's market,**  
Local organic farmers from Bihani Social Venture set up their weekend shops.  
7 March, 1 to 5pm, Maan Nam, Naxal, (01)4415613, nepalgolfzone@hotmail.com

**Video collective,**  
Artists Anil Subba and Ritesh Maharjan put on a collective performance.  
7 March, 4pm, Gallery Mcube, Mitra Marg, (01)5260110, gallerymcube@gmail.com, www.gallerymcube.blogspot.com

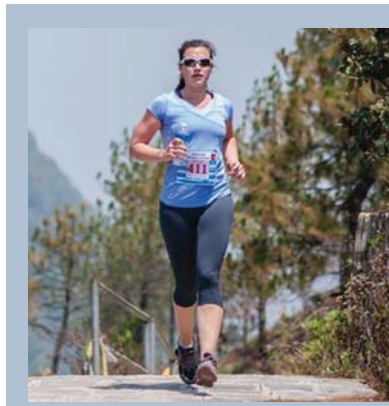
**Questioning equality,**  
Sheri Meyerhoffer looks at the status of women in Nepal through the lens of equality.  
Rs400, 6 March, 9.30am, Hotel Shanker, Lajimpat, sgninkathmandu@gmail.com

**Masculism,**  
An exhibition by Gopal Das Shrestha Kalapremi.  
Till 15 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4218048, sthapa@mos.com.np

**Double anniversary,**  
Sixtieth anniversary celebration of St Mary's High School and 20 years of its alumni association, ASMAN.  
Rs 1000, 7 March, 2pm, St Mary's High School, Jawalakhel, (01)5001192, info@asman.net.np, www.asman.net.np

**Why volunteer,**  
Shailendra Raj Giri of Mero Job talks about the benefits of volunteering.  
7 March, 11am to 1pm, Café & Shop Mitini, Lajimpat, (01)4226471, info@cleanupnepal.org.np, www.cleanupnepal.org.np

**Call for artists,**  
Local visual artists, sound artists and writers are invited to an open call for residency at Gallery Mcube.  
Deadline 7 March, Gallery Mcube, Mitra Marg, Patan (01)5260110, gallerymcube@gmail.com, www.gallerymcube.blogspot.com



**EVENTS**  
**The Laramie Project,**  
The One World Theatre brings to stage a docudrama telling the story of American Matthew Shepard who was beaten to death in 1998 in Laramie because of his homosexuality.  
Rs 500 (adult), Rs 200 (student), till 15 March, 5pm, Rs200 (adult), Rs100 (student), 7 and 14 March, 1pm, Theatre Village, Lajimpat, 9808041124, oneworldtheatreinnepal@gmail.com

**Golf Open,**  
A stableford tournament with 3/4 handicap game format.  
7 March, 8am, Gokarna Golf Club, Rajnikunj Gokarna, (01)4450444, golf1@gokarna.net



**Art Market,**  
Buy/sell art work, connect and share ideas. Live concert by jazz trio, New Age.  
7 March, 12pm to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01)5006665, ange@image-ark.com, nayantara@photocircle.com.np

**Rock, ride, run,**  
Outdoor athletes are invited to compete in this mega event.  
21 March, Hattiban Hills, (01)6218484, hello@himalayanoutdoorfestival.com, www.himalayanoutdoorfestival.com

**DINING**



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**Happy Hour,**  
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Every day, 4pm to 7pm, The Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, (01)4411818, outlets@radkat.com.np



**North meets south,**  
Enjoy the best of north and south Indian cuisine, expertly crafted for you by chef Satish Chandran.  
Kakori Restaurant, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, (01)4273999, reservation@scp.com.np, www.crowneplaza.com/kathmandu



**Coffee Escape,**  
In the heart of the city, the main highlights of this place are its Italian Illy coffee and pastas.  
Lajimpat, Anand Bhawan, (01)4445447, 7.30am to 9.30pm

**Social café,**  
An afternoon of music for the opening of Sisters Café & Beauty, a social enterprise promoting equality and dignity to Nepali women through training and employment.  
7 March, 3.30pm, Sanepa, Patan, sisterskathmandu@gmail.com

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## MUSIC



## Reggae Dub,

The only reggae sound system act from Nepal will make you move and groove this Friday Night.

Rs 200, 6 March, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com

## Ciney Gurung Live,

Enjoy listening to one of Nepal's most popular singers sing live.

11 March, Maan Nam Restaurant Lounge & Bar, (01)4415613, nepalgolfzone@hotmail.com

## Combos concert,

KJC's faculty trio, with Nepali guest musicians and students of the Nepal Jazz Workshop come together for a live jazz concert.

Rs 3000, 20 March, 7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, sunita@katjazz.com.np, www.katjazz.com.np



## Nepal Jazz Workshop,

An opportunity to attend jazz classes with international virtuosos, bassist Margie Pos, pianist Jeremy Siskind and saxophonist Mariano Abello.

Rs 1000 (KJC members), Rs 1500 (non-members), 18 to 20 March, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, sunita@katjazz.com.np, www.katjazz.com.np

## Classical Hindustani,

A live concert with Indian classical musicians Rakesh Chaurasia, Vijay Ghate and maestro Navaraj Gurung.

10 March, 4.45pm, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaldi, 9851112185, chautaricreation@gmail.com, www.chautaricreation.com



## GETAWAYS

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

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Nuwakot, (01)4700426, info@rural-heritage.com

## Hotel Landmark,

Made entirely from traditional Nepali bricks and woodcraft, this hotel is not only rich in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award-winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye.

Pokhara, (061)462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com



## Last Resort,

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Bhatekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247, info@thelastresort.com.np, www.thelastresort.com.np

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# Kingsman: The Secret Service




I have often been accused of being an easy viewer, something that I occasionally admit to myself after having enjoyed what I know to be a thoroughly bad film. But reviewing films, or anything for that matter, is really all about personal choice and opinion, borne out of the specific life experiences



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

that either hone your tastes towards only the lofty and arty or sometimes allow you to enjoy (having put aside your cerebrum) the thoroughly ridiculous. That being said, I truly doubt that anyone with a sense of humour would hate *Kingsman: The Secret Service* - the latest film

directed by Matthew Vaughn, who produced Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) and *Snatch* (2000), and who now has quite the pedigree as a maker of blockbusters after also having directed *Kick-Ass* (2010) and *X-Men: First Class* (2011). Adapted from a comic called *The Secret Service* by Dave Gibbons and Mark Millar, the film itself is a hilarious (but sometimes also oddly serious) spoof on the good old British Secret service, and in particular to a certain fictitious agent, with its age-old traditions, reverence to "Queen and country", and commitment to gadgets that should have become obsolete in the age of the smartphones. The plot centers around a shadowy group of spies (though not government affiliated) called the "Kingsmen" who operate using code names such as Arthur, Galahad, and Lancelot while not necessarily sitting at a round table.

When Lancelot (Jack Davenport) is killed under suspicious circumstances, Arthur (Michael Caine) calls for a replacement pushing all the Kingsmen into choosing a candidate each, overseen by Merlin (Mark Strong). It is Galahad (the wonderful and very talented Colin Firth), that throws a spanner into the mix when he selects Gary Unwin aka Eggsy (played by newcomer Taron Egerton) as his protégé, driven partly by guilt (Eggsy's father died saving Galahad on a mission), partly by gut instinct, but mostly by slight awe at Eggsy's very specific "flying by the seat of my pants" style and boyish charm. All kinds of antics ensue during Eggsy's training alongside his Oxbridge educated competitors, allowing us a particularly captivating introduction into a fantasy world of intrigue where a spy's coming of age is heralded by the commissioning of a bespoke, bulletproof suit from Saville Row. As people are betrayed and Eggsy struggles to save the world from a crazed tech billionaire, aptly named Richmond Valentine (Samuel L. Jackson), the jokes and the bullets fly. The extreme violence and action sequences are suitably stylised to keep you from throwing up in your seat, and the send offs as well as the tipped hat to the Bond films are so clever and charming that you will almost forgive yourself from being so thoroughly entertained by such a piece of fluff.  [nepalitimes.com](#)  Trailer 



## HAPPENINGS



**FOR EDUCATION:** Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae and Vice President Parmananda Jha inaugurate a scholarship award ceremony organised by the Indian Embassy at Hotel Radisson on Friday.



**MASS MEET:** UCPN (M) leader Baburam Bhattarai, UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Chairman of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal-Loktantrik Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar at the mass assembly organised by the UCPN(M) led 30-party alliance at Khula Manch in Kathmandu on Saturday.



**STOP ATTACK:** Acid attack victim Bindabasini Kansakar (second, left) with Mega Bank CEO Anil Shah at a protest rally against acid attacks at Basantapur on Tuesday.



**CLOSE CALL:** A Turkish Airlines Airbus 330 on the grass next to the runway after it suffered a nose gear collapse on landing at Kathmandu airport on Wednesday morning. All 237 passengers and crew were safe.

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Tulsipur : 082-562575



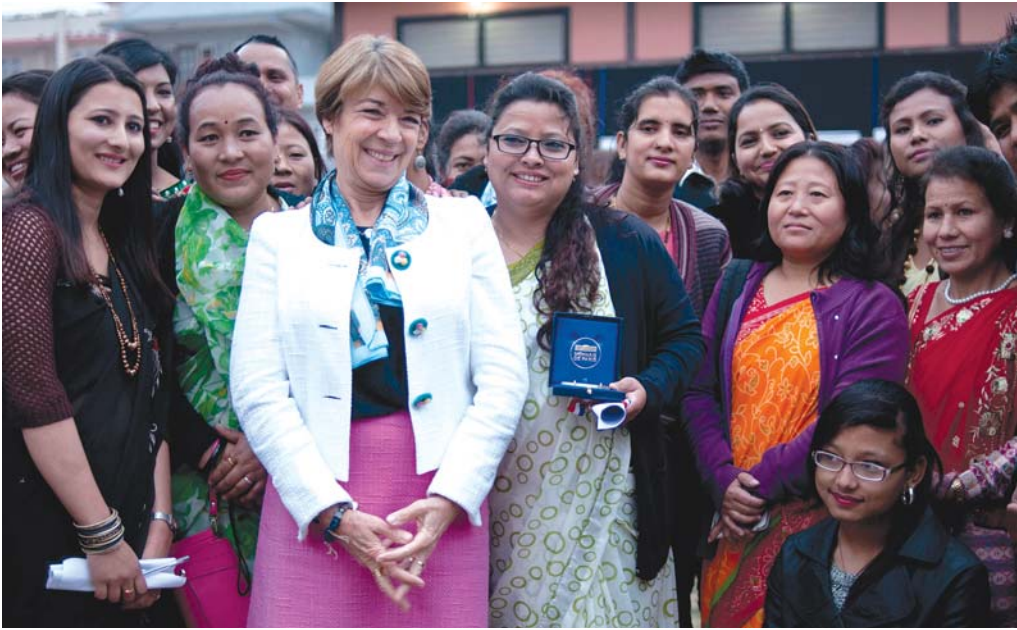
STÉPHANE HUËT

The Nepali anti-trafficking organisation, Shakti Samuha, has received the annual French Republic Human Rights Award, which is given to only three individuals around the world.

The National Advisory Commission on Human Rights in Paris decided to honour the Nepali organisation with a special mention 'Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité' for its program 'Learn Understand Act', a joint initiative with the French non-profit, Planète Enfants.

This recognition is the latest in a long list of international awards Shakti Samuha has received in the last few years. "We're very proud as this medal acknowledges our work," said Sunita Danuwar (pic), founder of Shakti Samuha at the awarding ceremony last week at Alliance Française in Kathmandu.

'Learn, Understand, Act' was started in 2007 to prevent violence against women through education, raising awareness and legal support. But at its creation in 1996, the organisation's major mission was to empower survivors of trafficking. Shakti Samuha was created by survivors of trafficking themselves who were stigmatised



INGRID CHIRON

# SHAKTI SAMUHA GETS FRENCH AWARD

by family and society when they came back from India.

"We knew it wasn't our fault," says Danuwar who was herself trafficked, "so we decided to transform our tears into power." Shakti Samuha means 'Power Group' in Nepali.

Since then, the group has built a network of about 2,000 volunteers in 11 districts most at risk where it organises communities to prevent young women from being lured away.

The group also works for the protection and rehabilitation of survivors who return

to Nepal. At Shakti Samuha, survivors are provided with shelter, legal aid, vocational training and counseling for three months. Survivors have two options when they are ready to leave Shakti Samuha: urban reintegration or return to their home village. If they decide to go back, they risk being trafficked again and are regularly followed up with.

Shakti Samuha has to send monitoring reports for each survivor to the partner organisations in India working to free trafficked Nepali women. "This is how we ensure the zero risk of re-trafficking," says Danuwar. Of the 663 women who have returned, not one has gone back to India.

Established by 12 trafficked women, Shakti Samuha today is still run mostly by survivors. "Sometimes it's hard to talk about our past," says Danuwar, "but it's important to tell our story to sensitise people."

When the founding members of Shakti Samuha were freed and sent back from India in 1996, the authorities didn't want them back in Nepal. Since then there has been a lot of progress in laws, but implementation is lagging behind.

This week, Sunita Danuwar flies to New York to participate in a conference of the Commission of Status of Women at the United Nations. She sees it as an opportunity to exchange experiences with other anti-trafficking organisations around the world. She says: "Most importantly, I will be coming back from New York with lots of experiences to share with my colleagues in Nepal."

# KAKORI

I'm not a food connoisseur but when a friend asked me if I wanted to review the flagship Indian restaurant at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza, I could not let it pass. Having spent three wonderful years in Delhi for college, and having eaten some of the best North Indian/Mughlai dishes there, I thought my palate was well-seasoned to take on the challenge.

Kakori is open only for dinners. During our visit the

restaurant was running a special promotional menu with Kebabs and Parathas.

We started our dinner with the customary chutneys, relishes and roasted papadums. Soon after, our order of Charminar Banjara Kebab (Rs 900) was brought to the table. According to Chef Yubaraj Pokhrel, this dish was a favourite of the Nawab of Hyderabad. The kebab was succulent, mildly spiced and was well complimented by onion rings it was served with.

Next up was the Dhunar Gosht Kebab (Rs 900), which was described to us as a minced mutton kebab smoked with charcoal. The kebabs were served alongside Khameeri paratha and chutney. The outside of the kebab was a little crispy and smoky and the inside was full of spice and it easily melted in our mouth.

The combination of kebab

and paratha with the chutney was heavenly. The chef candidly told us that these kebabs were made extraordinarily soft to accommodate the nawabs and emperors who did not have teeth.

For the vegetarian amongst us, we ordered a Jaffrani Tawa Kebab (Rs 950), which was a shallow fried assorted patty of beetroot, sweet potato, peas and paneer. The patty was soft but the paneer's taste overpowered all other ingredients.

All kebabs were served with two different parathas and daal makhani. The Taftaan paratha (Rs 200) was a multi-layered roti that went well with the daal and the soft kebabs. The Warki Kulcha paratha (Rs 200) on the other hand was very rich and aromatic as it had been generously marinated in ghee and saffron. I did not like that the parathas were a little stiff. Some of the best parathas I've had have been soft, easy to tear and able to scoop any

accompanying dishes.

Throughout our meal, the chef remained present to answer any questions we had about the dishes. Some of the kebabs he mentioned needed three days of preparation and many ingredients were sourced from abroad.

Although not all the dishes that we sampled had an excellent taste, we enjoyed our meal overall. The price may put off many diners from enjoying a dinner here, but in the restaurant's defence, it is worth the effort that goes into making these truly authentic and quality dishes.

Prabhas Man Singh

How to get there: Kakori is inside Soaltee Crowne Plaza in Tahachal.



PICS: SURENDRA SHARMA

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# Ask Anjana Anything

**H**i. This week, I start my new column Ask Anjana Anything. Maybe you are not getting along with your best friend, maybe you are having a



hard time expressing yourself to your family, or you don't know where you are headed in life. I

don't think anyone does, but along the way I will try my best to make sense of how to take the next step. I will only make suggestions, because in the end it is your decision and your life.

Often, the lack of communication is the biggest barrier for relationships in Nepal, as elsewhere. One's appearance and position in society takes precedence over having the strength to be one's true, strong and happy self. I am not an authority on what is right. I am self-aware, and think it is important we love the skin we are in.

Since this is the first

installment of the Ask Anjana Anything column, allow me to introduce myself. I have a Masters in Human Development and Family Relations and am fascinated with the human mind and how it works. I did a year of study abroad in Ireland (my favorite country in the world) and my International Baccalaureate from United World College of the Adriatic in Italy where I managed to gain 20+kgs in 3 months, details later.

I have four years of work experience as an adult mental health case manager where I worked with 15-20 clients with co-occurring disorders (mental

health disorder and substance abuse). I am a certified mental health rehabilitation technician/ community.

I have worked with individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds who struggle to make it through the day: homelessness, those who lack family support and victims of abuse. It is important to value little things in life.

I moved back to Nepal after 14 years hence I belong to this group of third culture where I am a cocktail of Nepali values and Western behaviour. I go to temples, and I believe men and women deserve the same freedom

of expression. I have struggled, which is necessary for growth, to experience life and appreciate the very few real, genuine people. The scars we get long the way are a beautiful reminder of what you have made through.

I believe in treating everyone with kindness, in appreciating the instant as that is all I have. I have respect for empathy and loyalty. This column will offer support and ideas on any issue that is bothering or confusing you, something you are struggling with. 🇳🇵

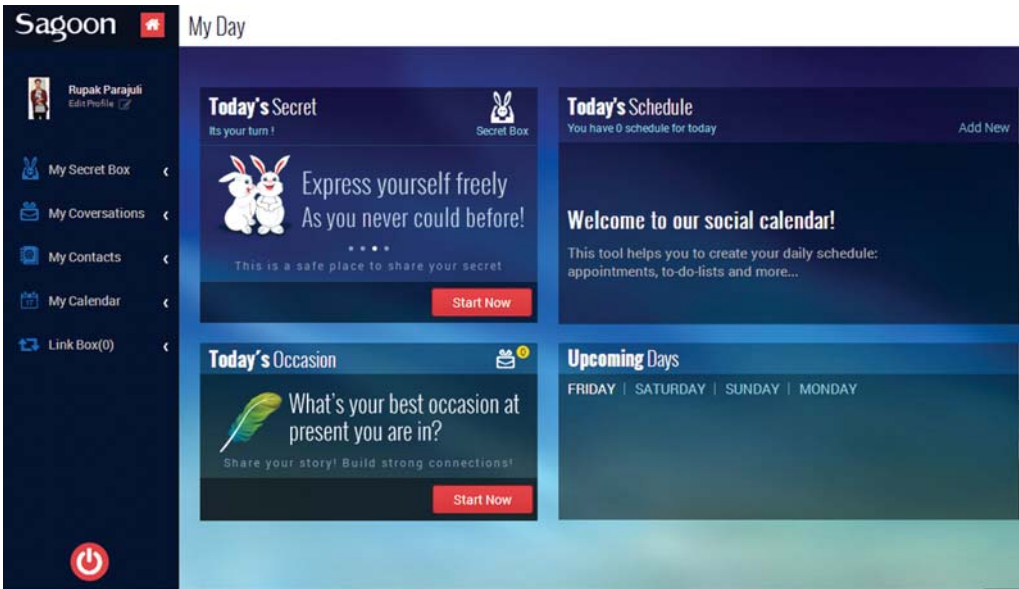
All you have to do is write in to this email: askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com

## GIZMO by YANTRICK

## A SAGOON FUTURE

**W**ith giants like Facebook and Google+ on top of the list with over a billion registered users, it is getting increasingly difficult to make a breakthrough in today's market, but Govinda Giri was determined to reinvent the way we communicate through social media. The newly launched Sagoon is more than just a platform for sharing content, and what's interesting is that they will pay you for using their services. Needless to say, this is definitely worth a try.

Upon signing up for Sagoon, \$5 will be credited to your Social Smart Card, which aims to improve the way we shop and buy gifts online. Unfortunately, they have yet to provide a list of vendors for this credit system, though that should coincide with the launch of its mobile version in a few months' time.



Right off the homepage, you will realise that the usual newsfeed layout is absent. Instead, Sagoon chose to go with an integrated social calendar that allows you to create, customise, and keep track of your plans for the days ahead — Facebook Events can certainly learn a thing or two from this. This also comes with the weather forecast for the next two days.


Another interesting feature in Sagoon is the 'secret box', a fresh new way to share content in an easy secure manner. It allows you to either send three new photos using your webcam or existing images from your computer, add secret texts, and preview before sending out the private message. The team behind this new social networking site based in India does this

really well through a neat interface, where information shared with your friends will expire after they have read it, so you can be assured that none of your secrets will be saved on Sagoon's server.

There's also a feature to share memorable events to specific groups of people, by sorting your contacts into the groups provided: friends, family, or co-workers. This system for managing contacts will also allow you to choose who you want to share your secret messages with.

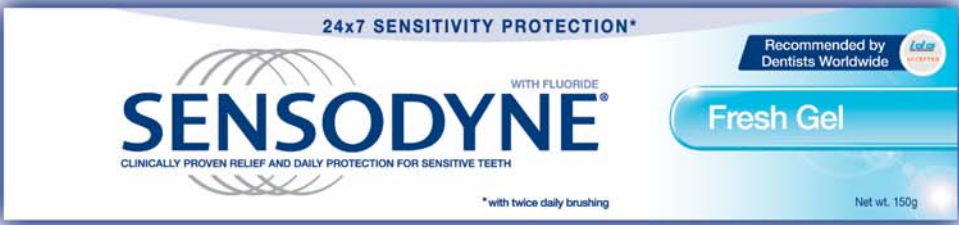
Since Sagoon is still in its nascent stage in open beta, there is certainly room for it to unleash its potential through their dedicated user feedback system. But even with more than 10,000 registered users, it will still be a big challenge to persuade all our friends to jump on to another platform, especially since we are rather content with Facebook. 🇳🇵

**YANTRICK'S VERDICT: Sagoon definitely has the potential to develop into a household name in the future but for now, it has to do much more to persuade anyone to sign up for yet another social networking service.**



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# Being Nepali or becoming Nepali?

Nepal has one of the most progressive laws on gay and lesbian rights, but still treats its women as second-class citizens



DEVAKI BISTA

## ANJANA RAJBHANDARY

Deepti Gurung's older daughter had to give up her dream of being a doctor because the medical college would not admit her without a Nepali citizenship certificate. She doesn't have one simply because Nepali law doesn't allow citizenship in the name of the mother.

Nepal has one of the most progressive laws on gay and lesbian rights, but still treats its women as second-class citizens because children whose fathers are non-Nepali, who are raised by single mothers or whose mothers were victims of rape, are not eligible for citizenship.

Says Deepti: "People told me to get my daughter married or request the biological father to be able to get her citizenship. But I raised my daughter to be strong and independent, not needing a man for her identity. It is a crime not to provide citizenship to children of Nepali mothers, not just discrimination."

If a Nepali woman is married

to a foreigner, he has to give up his citizenship and wait 15 years to be considered, which does not always happen. During this process, their child is also unable to become Nepali.

Jorge, 32, also struggled to get his citizenship. He was born and raised in Nepal to a Nepali mother and a European father. He has applied for a passport, but is being given the run-around. "They gave me a list of Nepali male names and said pick one, but I couldn't, so I don't have a passport. It's hard, but life is still beautiful and I will fight because I feel Nepali."

The other category of children who are not eligible for citizenship are those whose mothers were victims of sexual assault, or if their husbands have abandoned them. Not having a citizenship leaves people in limbo: they are unable to get jobs, go to schools, and drive a car or travel.

Activists say there are about 4 million 'stateless' people in Nepal, and the numbers are multiplying because parents who cannot prove their citizenship are

having children who are also not eligible to be Nepali. Many are not able to go abroad to work, or find jobs at home, and some are turning to crime and violence.

"Even refugees have an identity when they seek asylum, but many Nepalis who are born and raised in Nepal cannot call themselves citizens of Nepal because they are unable to provide proof of a Nepali father, this is outrageous," says Gurung. "Earlier, citizenship was a right, now it has to be granted by the state. Women have been discriminated for centuries and this is an extension of patriarchy."

Human rights lawyers point out that an abandoned child on the streets will be given citizenship by the state, but children with a Nepali mother cannot get their papers. Stateless people are not registered anywhere, so officially they do not exist.

Powerful politicians have refused to allow citizenship in the name of the mother because they say Nepal would be swamped by Indian men marrying Nepali women. However, this 'nationalism' argument falls flat because children of Nepali men who marry non-Nepali women can get citizenship over the counter.

Subin Mulmi of the Forum for Women, Law and Development says, "Till February 2014 there was not a single known case of a child born to a Nepali mother and a foreign father successfully acquiring their naturalised citizenship."

Meanwhile, Deepti Gurung's daughter is currently in law school, which does not require Nepali citizenship. She hopes to become a lawyer to fight for her rights, but she would still need a citizenship certificate to get a legal practicing license. 🇳🇵



BIKRAM RAI

## Corrosive laws

Lenient punishment is not a deterrent for heinous crimes like acid attacks

**BINITA DAHAL**

Students Sangita Magar and Seema Basnet are recovering from the recent acid attack in Kathmandu, and from their hospital beds have repeatedly appealed to the police to arrest the attacker so they don't inflict the pain on other girls. It has been two weeks, and the criminal is still at large.

The attack has brought into sharp focus the legal loopholes that allow perpetrators of violence against women in Nepal to evade arrest, or even if they are caught to be set free soon after. Though acid attacks are rare compared to other forms of violence in Kathmandu, it is used as a way to seek revenge on women and girls.

Women rights activist Renu Adhikari of Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) agreed that the number of acid attacks is increasing, and that makes it necessary for perpetrators to get punishment without possible bail.

"Acid attack perpetrators must get punished under attempted murder," she said. Perpetrators are booked under culpable homicide which carries only a fine of up to Rs 2,000 and a maximum sentence of four months.

WOREC filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court demanding a law to punish perpetrators of acid attacks after an incident in Tarai six years ago. The Supreme Court directed the government to amend the necessary provision of the existing law so the victims get justice and the perpetrators get punished, which hasn't happened yet.

The Law Ministry hasn't received the proposal to amend legal provision from the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. However, Joint Secretary Radhika Aryal says the ministry is working to set up fast track courts.

The Supreme Court's five year strategic plan has prioritised fast track courts to speed up the process of justice, but the lack of judges in the court system and lack of hearing dates can sometimes take years for a final verdict.

The Supreme Court also directed the appointment of women police officers for investigation and women judges for hearings of crimes against women. This also has not yet been implemented.

The National Women's Commission (NWC) doesn't have a proper record of the number of acid attacks in Nepal, and Mohana Ansari of the National Human Rights Commission says that in most cases the police is reluctant to arrest the perpetrator, who either walks free or the case gets dismissed.

"Incorrect and insufficient reporting and following up makes it difficult to keep records of acid attack which are not as common, but very dangerous," said Ansari.

An important concern is whether people should be allowed to easily purchase acid or not, and if so, there should be strict regulations on its sale.

Though acid attacks are not as common as other forms of violence against women, such as dowry burning, the aftermath is equally excruciating. This raises the question of safety for girls and women here.

When a human rights activist met with Prime Minister Sushil Koirala last week, he supported the notion of mandatory punishment for acid attackers. However, unless the law is tightened for perpetrators, they may continue to use acid attacks as a form of revenge as they seem to have done in the attack on Sangita Magar and Seema Basnet. 🇳🇵



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KUNDA DIXIT

# CLEAN KILNS

Lack of incentives for green bricks means factories are still using old, polluting technology

**SONIA AWALE**

**S**oot particles emitted from Kathmandu brick kilns contribute at least 40 per cent to the Valley's air pollution in winter, and this is not just a health hazard but also hastens Himalayan glacial melting.

Cheaper, cleaner and more energy efficient technologies are available, yet brick factories continue to spew out thick black smoke from their stacks on the city outskirts.

"Brick kilns, along with crop fires and vehicle emissions emit soot particles that exacerbate climate change, contribute to glacial melting, affect monsoon rainfall and also cause cardio-pulmonary ailments in people living in Kathmandu," says Arnico Panday, Senior Atmospheric Scientist at ICIMOD.

However, hope is at hand. A recent conference in Godavari showcased cleaner

and energy efficient technologies for brick kilns that could reduce air pollution in Kathmandu and lessen the emission of black carbon that cause glaciers to melt.

Of the 1,100 or so brick kilns in Nepal, one-third are in Kathmandu Valley. Most use traditional Bull Trench models that are inefficient, energy-intensive and polluting. The improved Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln (VSBK) that burns less coal and emits less smoke is being used in only eight brick factories in Nepal, including two in the Valley.

"The shafts burn much less coal much more efficiently so the bricks are ready in 24 hours, and you can see there is very little dust and smoke here," said supervisor Raj Kumar Lama (*pic, above*) while showing visitors how clay moulds are loaded into the furnace of the Satyanarayan Brick Kiln in Imadol. Lama is much sought after in Nepal and abroad, having helped build VSBK

factories in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Unlike other kilns, clay mould-making here is mechanised so the bricks produced are of standard weight and dimensions. They are then dried in the sun for a week before being loaded into the vertical shafts. Coal bits are loaded in between before the furnace is fired.

However, despite the better technology, customers still prefer bricks made from traditional factories because they are redder, and do not crack as easily. VSBK bricks are smoother, and can be used for Rat Trap masonry walls which have better insulation, are sound-proof and lighter because fewer bricks are needed.

VSBK factories are more expensive to build, the brick-making needs more water, and factories need to employ workers all year round. VSBK is more mechanised and therefore needs electricity which is in short supply. All this drives up the cost of bricks.

Kathmandu's demand for bricks grows 15 per cent annually, as the construction industry booms. Unless cleaner kilns are used, the Valley's air is bound to get dirtier.

"There are regulations about zoning of brick factories and their pollution levels, but enforcement is lacking," says Suyesh Prajapati, an international expert in brick technology in Kathmandu. "If there were incentives and rewards for factories to be green, they would change to cleaner technologies."

The irony is that Nepali experts like Raj Kumar Lama and Suyesh Prajapati are more in demand abroad than in their own country. Lama says he decided to stay on in Nepal to create jobs here so Nepalis don't have to migrate.

"Everyone wants to go abroad, I am trying to train Nepalis so they stay here and work in pollution-free brick factories," he says, admitting that many of the brick-makers he has trained are now working in Qatar or Malaysia. Still, Lama is proud that unlike other kilns, there are only Nepali workers in Satyanarayan.

The Godavari conference on clean brick kiln last month recommended green certification to influence public procurement so there is demand-side pressure for clean production. Zoning laws should be enforced, and environment-friendly factories rewarded with incentives.

It seems we know what needs to be done. We just need to go ahead and do it.

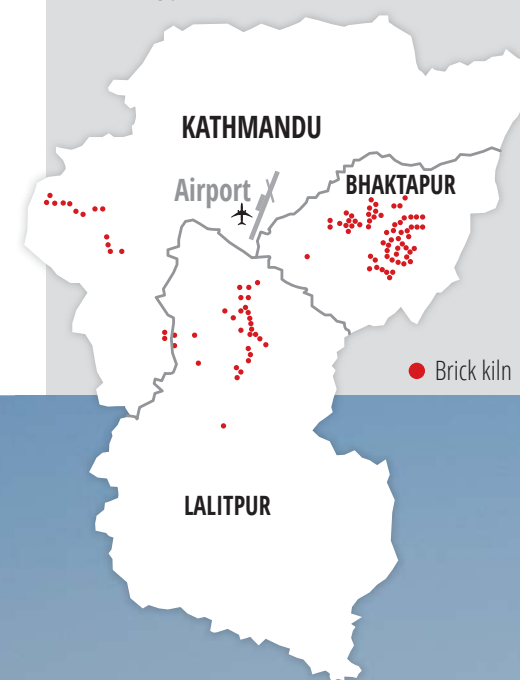
## Runway not visible

The Turkish 726 incident at Kathmandu on Wednesday morning has been attributed to poor visibility on the runway threshold. Many brick kilns are located on the final approach path to the runway in Lalitpur (*see map, below*) and this makes it difficult for pilots to see the runway.

"Brick kilns are making visibility worse, no doubt about it," confirms Rajesh Chitrakar, an air traffic controller at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). The problem has made TIA notorious for flight delays, and airlines lose money burning fuel while on long holding patterns waiting for the visibility to improve.

"The visibility is much better during the monsoon when the kilns are not working, and it is really bad in winter when the smoke mixes with the fog," Chitrakar says.

The minimum visibility required for landings at Kathmandu is 1,600m at the threshold of the runway, and most winter mornings it is less than that and the airport has to be closed. On Wednesday, the visibility was 3,000m but there were smog patches to the east of the airfield.



● Brick kiln

# The other bad carbon

Black carbon is easier and faster to control than carbon dioxide to reduce global warming and health hazards

**KUNDA DIXIT**

**F**or decades, governments around the world have tried to cut emissions of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere so global warming stays below a 2 degree rise by the end of the century. That target is not likely to be met.

But there is another kind of carbon – tiny soot particles given off by vehicles, cook stoves and crop fires called 'black carbon' – that contribute significantly to global warming which may be easier to control.

An international conference in Kathmandu last week organised by ICIMOD and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)

discussed the best and fastest ways to reduce soot emissions. Recommendations will be presented at a summit of world leaders in Paris in December.

"To meet the 2 degree target, it would be quicker and easier to reduce black carbon than carbon dioxide," Norway's Special Envoy on Climate Change and CCAC Co-chair Hanne Bjurstrøm told *Nepali Times*, "and that would also reduce the harm to human health from pollutants."

Black carbon particles smaller than 2.5 microns, are emitted after incomplete combustion of diesel, coal, firewood, or crop residue, and are second only to carbon dioxide gas in warming the earth. Himalayan glaciers

also melt faster when this ash darkens snow and ice.

Since global negotiations to cap carbon dioxide emissions are stuck, cleaning up vehicular exhausts, reducing smoke from domestic stoves, brick kilns and forest fires could reduce global warming by 0.5 degree by the end of the century, scientists say.

Black carbon is classified as a 'short-lived climate pollutant' together with methane, aerosols, the refrigerant HFC, and surface ozone, which together add to the warming caused by carbon dioxide from fossil fuel-burning.

Controlling black carbon would also have enormous health benefits. At present air pollution kills 2.5 million people every year around the world. In Nepal,







PICS: SONIA AWALE



**DETAILED ATTENTION:** (Clockwise from left) Baby sitter, Anita Lama, tries to put children of brick kiln workers to sleep in a crèche at a factory in Lalitpur this week.

Kiln worker Debaki Adhikari (*with baby*) from Sindhupalchok shares her temporary hut with her children, including a daughter (*in blue*) who is preparing for her SLC.

Yam Kumari GC from Rolpa works in a brick kiln in Kathmandu which pays for her two children to go to a government school nearby.

# Child-free bricks

Nepal's brick industry has been under fire for decades for poor labour practices, but more and more kiln owners are under pressure to improve working conditions. Media attention, lobbying by activists and the threat that customers may not buy bricks made by children has goaded some owners to ban workers under 18, set up day care centres, and even pay to send children of working parents to school. Debaki Adhikari is a mother of three from Sindhupalchok who has joined her husband to make clay moulds at the Satyanarayan Brick Factory in Imadol of Lalitpur. The children go to nearby schools, and one daughter is home preparing for her SLC exams next month. Co-worker Jaimali Budhamagar has been coming to Kathmandu from Rolpa every winter for the past 12

years. "My son went to school this morning, he is in Grade 3," she says proudly. Across the Valley, the Champi Mai Brick Kiln has set up a day care centre for children of workers between the ages of five months to five years where they get three meals a day. The company has enrolled older children in nearby government schools. Yam Kumari GC, also from Rolpa, moves to Kathmandu with her family for six months in a year to earn extra income, and she is happy her children can go to school while here. "My daughter goes to school every day, she is really interested in her studies and is doing well in class," Yam Kumari tells us, looking up from her washing. Champi Mai is one of five kilns which is working with activists from the Better Brick Nepal Program to get a BCN (Brick Clean Network) certification for correct labour

practices and environmental standards. Satyanarayan uses the Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln (VSBK) technology, while Champi Mai uses 'Zig-zag' kilns, both of which are less polluting than traditional furnaces. Raj Kumar Lama, who operates the modern furnaces at Satyanarayan, is an international VSBK expert. He says: "Our workers don't want to go to other kilns because there is much less dust and smoke here." At an international conference on brick kiln reform in Godavari last month, Satyanarayan's owner Chandra Maharjan, said: "Nepal is making progress in eliminating child labour in brick kilns." Maharjan is also a nominated member of the Constituent Assembly, and is lobbying to legislate labour and environmental safeguards for the brick industry. Champi Mai's owner, Mangal Maharjan, says employing children is actually bad for business: "Children

distract their parents and they could get hurt, so sending them to school ensures higher productivity." Homraj Acharya of Better Brick Network works with Champi Mai, and agrees that brick kiln owners themselves want to remove child labour. "They are under pressure from activists and the media, so they want to give their industry a cleaner image. It's a challenge, but zero child labour in brick kilns is achievable." At Champi Mai, activist Usha Manandhar does the rounds of workers' quarters to convince remaining families to send their children to school. She explains: "Many times it is the labour contractors who are responsible for child labour. Owners have realised that social responsibility need not be expensive. They now know that child-friendly bricks is good for business." Sonia Awale in Lalitpur

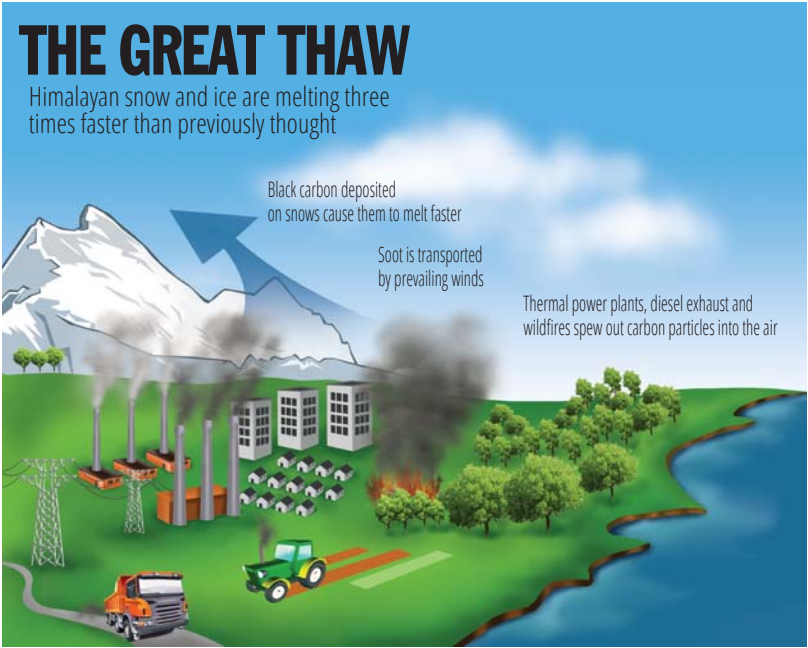


BIKRAM RAI

indoor smoke from cook stoves are major causes of lung infections, especially among children and the elderly. Kathmandu Valley's winter inversion that traps vehicle and brick kiln emissions makes it one of the most polluted cities in the world. For example, one survey in January on the outskirts of Kathmandu found that pollution levels doubled when brick

kilns went into operation. Acute respiratory infection caused by indoor smoke is a major killer of children in rural Nepal. "Other cities have pollution emergencies, but in Kathmandu we regularly live through undeclared air quality emergencies," says ICIMOD's Arnico Panday, Senior Atmospheric Scientist at ICIMOD. Although the Nepal government has a target of making all homes

indoor smoke-free by 2017, forest fires and the practice of burning agricultural residue will be harder to control. Even if Nepal reduces it, prevailing winds will still blow up pollution from crop fires in the Indian states of Haryana and Punjab. Farmers set fire to their fields after a harvest to quickly clear it for another crop, and there is a mistaken belief that ash is good fertiliser. However, crop fires can be outlawed. For example, the former Soviet Balkan republics don't do it anymore, but fields are still set on fire after harvests in Russia. Soot from these fires are deposited in the Arctic, causing the ice there to melt faster. Svanta Bodin of International Cryosphere Initiative, an expert on crop residue fires says there is precedent that incentives and legislation can control agricultural fires. But he adds: "In South Asia, you have to start with farmers."





# Barta the bard

Sajana Baral in *Himal Khabarpatrika*

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Barta Gandharva's petite figure belies her powerful voice and sarangi skills. A native of Bhojpur, Barta first learnt to play the traditional Nepali violin from her mother with whom she travelled around villages earning a living. Today, the 27-year-old performs at concerts, rubs shoulders with popular bands like Kutumba, but says making a living is as difficult as it was then.

"Wherever I go, people ask me if I can play the guitar or the keyboard. The sarangi is not appreciated much," says Barta who is a member of an all-female Nepali folk band, Shree Tara.

Barta studied music at Lalit Kala Campus and sarangi at Nepal Music Centre on a scholarship. Now she teaches at Norway's University of Agder and Nepal Sangeet Vidyalaya. She also taught sarangi to students at Ani Choying Drolma's Arya Tara School for seven years before the classes were cancelled by management citing lack of funds.

She feels that since the sarangi is mainly being used for fusion music, the importance of traditional singers like her has decreased which makes grooming a new generation of female musicians difficult. "Maybe because they see no future in this field so even good students drop out. It is sad when this happens," she says.

Barta wants to pursue a graduate degree in singing, but laughs saying that it may be unrealistic: "Look at how much I had to struggle, nothing has happened even with all this hard work."

Barta is currently working on an album, most of which she composed while in Norway.



Help!  
My life is in danger.

Rabindra Manandhar  
on Twitter,  
22 February

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“If there is no consensus by 10 March we will launch another round of protest campagin.”

Prem Bahadur Singh, Spokesperson for the 30-party opposition alliance as quoted in *himalkhabar.com*, 5 March.

# “Saran undid monarchy deal”

Bal Kumar Nepal in *Annapurna Post*, 2 March

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) Chair Pashupati Shumsher Rana has made the sensational disclosure that the political parties had reached a secret deal with the then king Gyanendra in 2006 to not abolish the monarchy. However, former Indian ambassador Shyam Saran played spoilsport and overturned the deal.

Rana told journalists that Karan Singh mediated between the political parties and Gyanendra to save the monarchy. But, Saran, who was by then India's Foreign Secretary visited Kathmandu after Singh and the agreement unravelled.

Singh had come to Kathmandu as a special envoy of India at the height of the April Uprising-2006, and shortly after Gyanendra announced that he was ready to step down as Chair of the Council



between then king and political parties,” said Rana. “But, the deal was off when Saran returned to Delhi.”

Rana is related to Karan Singh, and this revelation at a politically critical time is now being viewed as meaningful. Highly placed sources say the secret deal would have amended a law about the monarchy in the first session of the reinstated parliament on 18 May 2006.

Last month, issuing a statement on the eve of Democracy Day, Gyanendra claimed he had reached an agreement with political parties in 2006 which they had gone back on. He urged political parties to implement that agreement, but did not specify which one it was.

Meanwhile, the political parties denied any agreement with Gyanendra, and NC leader Krishna Sitaula has said the only deal was that political parties would allow the ex-King to live in Nirmal Niwas.

of Ministers and form a new government of political parties. But, political parties rejected Shah's offer outright.

Gyanendra reinstated parliament which he had dissolved accusing political parties of being 'inefficient' in dealing with Maoist violence, maintain political stability and ensure good governance.

“What Karan Singh said publicly before returning to India indicated that there was a deal

# You and I

Lyricist Rajan Mukarung on his Facebook page, 1 March

facebook



Only those who experience discrimination up close and personal know what it is and how deeply entrenched it is in our society. And, they are usually the ones speaking up

about the issue. Everyone else is just busy poking holes into the validity of the cause. To them I say, hold back your opposing voices. How can you promote humanity when you are too reluctant to listen to the cries of the victims?

What difference will there be between you and I, if I also become as narrow-minded as you. If it bothers you that we suggest you become more open-minded, then you can continue with what you have been doing. However, my friend, you must understand that the only thing getting worse will be your ability to see. We are only asking you to remove your blindfold and see things with clearer eyes, we are not threatening to gouge out your eyes.

The writer posted this as a reply to criticism about his earlier status on Kali Prasad Rijal's lyrics representing the state's hill-centric mentality: 'May my eyes see the mountains as soon as I wake up, may these hands forever write Nepal'.

This song was not written by Kali Prasad Rijal but by the state's hill-centric mentality. Does this mean the people who cannot see mountains are not Nepalis?



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# Sedition + Treason = Self-Loathing

Those who question the legitimacy of the current government should review the last election results

It took full blown self-righteous indignation to drag the Hand out of retirement after a half-decade of blissful indifference. As the constitution writing continues to be blocked by the same people who insisted on the process in the first place, we're now hearing threats of armed revolt from all parties who lost the last election. Isn't that illegal, screamed my beleaguered mind?



## MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

A newspaper report on a recent meeting of the CPN (Moribund), detailing their decision to become a 'Militant Party' and 'develop' an army of 10 to 15,000 cadres, got your columnist wondering why these people aren't thrown in jail. Can any party form a private militia (sounds feudal to me) to wage war on the state just because nobody voted for them? After ten tragic years of pointless conflict and another six (or is it 8? 9?) of

fruitless constitution drafting, are we doomed to repeat the same mistakes?

The fact that such a momentous declaration was buried on page 3 indicates such threats aren't taken very seriously, but that doesn't change the fact the nation's laws on treason are being scorned with impunity.

Keeping track of which party is threatening the state these days can be a challenge, especially since the Maoists have degenerated into multiple competing cabals. This particular call to arms, issued by Netra Bikram Chand's faction of the CPN (M), begs the question why it never occurs to such politicians to 'develop' the country instead of an army, or at least 'develop' some self-discipline and respect for others (like the voters, for example, who rejected such violent agendas at the polls).

Their plan to recruit ex-PLA and YCL members into an armed force is not only illegal but displays a shocking lack of respect for the country and its institutions. Those who purport to be nationalists and saviors of the nation are plotting to destroy the state, which must be some perverted form of grand scale

self-loathing that I'll leave for the psychiatrists to analyse.

The article goes on to say 'sources' speculate the party only has a 'few hundred weapons' dating from the insurgency (that were supposed to be turned in to the UN, by the way), not nearly enough to launch a civil war. As usual, what appears to be good news is anything but, since 'much of the party activity is funded through vigorous donation campaign', otherwise known as extortion. Arming, training and feeding 15,000 full-time combatants is a costly affair that you, dear readers, will be expected to finance to ensure you can be better coerced with the weapons you just paid for. It's as if the traitors of the nation insist that we, the hapless denizens, get dragged down to their level and become traitors to ourselves by forcing us to pay for our own demise.

According to a central committee member, the party decreed all cadre must adopt 'pseudonyms to evade their identity' which sounds like they're hiding from themselves and smacks yet again of self-loathing. Strict anonymity is to

be observed at all times, probably because such childish behavior in grown men is embarrassing, and activities are to be carried out in a 'semi-underground style', whatever that means. Such official sanction of a strategy usually reserved for criminal mafias, it's worth noting, is unlikely to be a coincidence.

When confused, reach for the dictionary. Webster's defines sedition as 'incitement of resistance to or insurrection against lawful authority,' which describes the party's declaration with remarkable accuracy. Then there's treason: 'the offense of attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government of the state the offender owes allegiance to.' Bingo!

The meaning of words can change over time, of course, and I wondered if my dog-eared dictionary wasn't out of date. Perhaps a more current definition of sedition and treason should read 'desperate activity initiated by floundering politicians who have lost all touch with reality.' As support for the Maoists collapses, firing up their base with cries to rebel must be a last ditch attempt at recreating the good old days when they were still relevant.

Those who would question the legitimacy of the current government should perform a reality-check by reviewing the last election results. The politics of confrontation and conflict, as epitomised by the Maoists, was rejected by a massive turn out at the polls. Whenever Maoists of all stripes threaten another civil war or to set up a 'parallel government', as Prachanda does every other day, their disrespect for that verdict becomes painfully obvious.

The fact that nobody ever gets arrested for sedition and treason inevitably makes the perpetrators despise the state even more. To employ the logic of the only Marx worth listening to (Groucho), who refused to join a club that would have him as a member, we can't expect those who publicly threaten armed insurrection with impunity to ever respect a country too weak to jail them for their crimes. 🇳🇵

*Foreign Hand is a curmudgeon meddler and long term resident of Nepal afflicted with a strong distaste for hypocrisy. He is restarting the column he used to write for Nepali Times in 2006-2008 until silenced by the fear of retaliation.*

# Rugby gets a kick-start

STÉPHANE HUËT

Twelve players of the Nepal Rugby Sevens are facing Bangladesh, UAE and India at the Asia Rugby Development Sevens in Chennai on 7-8 March.

This week, despite the rain the team has been training hard. Coach Govinda Ghimire says he isn't sure about their chances at the Asia Rugby Development Sevens, but says the team will give their best shot.

Team manager Tanka Raj Giri is more concerned with the condition of his players when they reach Chennai. "We have to travel three days by road," he says, "and we only have one day break when we arrive."

The Nepal Rugby Association (NRA) was established in 1992 and registered at the National Sports Council in 1995. It's only in 2012 that Tanka Giri, a travel professional from Jumla, gave the sport a real kick-start in Nepal.

"I discovered rugby when I joined England's Aldershot and Fleet RUFC in 2002," recalls Giri. "When I came back home, I wanted to create a team here." He got together with Tanka Lal Ghising and



LAL GHISING

Chetan Giri, and set up NRA.

Tanka Giri preferred starting with the seven-a-side rugby. "This format is the best to begin," he says. "There are less tackles and therefore we have less injuries."

It took time for rugby to catch on in Nepal. "We got a few people together from all over Nepal," he recalls, they created clubs in their respective districts. This rapid

enthusiasm enabled the NRA to organise its first national tournament last January.

"With five teams from different regions of Nepal, the January tournament was the opportunity to select our players for the Asia Rugby Development Sevens," says Raj Giri.

The NRA was affiliated with the Asian Rugby Union last year. "That was a big step for us," says coach Ghimire. "We are

now allowed to compete in international tournaments."

In November 2014, the team went to New Delhi for a series of friendly matches against Delhi Hurricanes at the All India and South Asia Rugby Tournament. "We won one of our three matches," says the Nepal captain, Navin Giri, "it was good experience to play with an international team."

The players are also showing much more confidence. "We know how good we are and I believe we can win," says team member Rabin Bhujel. Nepal is currently in the 'Development category' and if they win this tournament in Chennai, it will reach the professional group of Asia Rugby Sevens.

NRA has plans to evolve the team and to make rugby more popular in Nepal. "We'll take the opportunity of the World Cup next September to organise campaigns to recruit new players," says Tanka Giri. "Maybe we'll be able to reinforce our women's team after that."

NRA also wishes to have Nepal's very own XV Rugby team. "Rugby is still new in the country," says Navin Giri. "We have to go slowly to reach this next big step." 🇳🇵



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Holi guacamoli

Nepal's tourism calendar is filling up with exciting events, reinforcing the country's image as an "adventure" destination and proving once more that Nepal is not for the faint-hearted. Closing the airport for four days was a brilliant move. It improves the Nepal brand by allowing the country to play hard-to-get. It adds an additional sense of mystique and exoticism, excitement and unpredictability to a **Himalayan horriday**. This public relations masterstroke allows us to build on international publicity after **Tribhuvan Incontinental Airport** was placed in the Top Ten Worstest Airports in the World for the third year in a row in 2014. This week, TIA is trending all over BuzzFeed, YouTube, Huffpost -- free worldwide publicity that money can't buy.

But this doesn't mean we neglect Nepal's traditional attractions like our cultural heritage and festivals. Which is why the **Maoist Million Man Long March** last week was such a great tourist draw. Where else in the world (besides Pyongyang) can you in this day and age see portraits of Kim Il Sung and Stalin adorning the stage at a rally organised by a party inspired by Mao Tse Tung? Next time, **Time Warp Tours** and **Utopian Nostalgia Travels** should sell package tours to those who still think Communism is a bed of roses.

Never a dull moment in the Nepal Spring. After the **May the Force Be With You Show** last week at the Khula Munch, the nation marked Holi festival with two holidays: one for the Madhes and one for the Pahad. This country has already been carved into autonomous federal units, what are they arguing on about?

There has been a lot of speculation this week about why BRB air-dashed to Delhi in the middle of his party's shindig. Whenever a Nepali leader hops on a plane heading south, people are always passing snide remarks like: he's kowtowing to the **Mughal Emperor**, he's gone to pay respects to the **Delhi Durbar**, he is sampling the betel nut at **Yamu's Panchayat Paan** at Connaught Place, or all of the above. It's not funny, OK. An ex-PM going to India to tattle about another ex-PM from his own party is a matter of serious national importance and a last-ditch attempt to forge a consensus between netas and babus in Delhi about what should be their Nepal policy. Luckily for Comrade Red Flag the closure of Kathmandu airport has meant he has got to extend his stay in Delhi and work some more to build that consensus.



Back home in Kathmandu, even if there is no water in the mains there is enough in the drains to splash each other this Holi. It is important to bear in mind the importance of observing and conserving Nepal's festivals. Otherwise, pretty soon the only customs we will have left will be the one at **Tribhuvan Intermittent Airport**. Look, for instance, at our national past-time of partaking of a noon nap at Tundikhel. There used to be a time when Tundikhel was so jam-packed with our snoozing ancestors that it was standing room only. Latecomers had to move to Sano Tundikhel, and even that got pretty full up on some lazy winter afternoons.

But today, you'd be lucky if you saw even one person dozing there. The relentless march of time in a globalised world with its consumerist materialist juggernaut, and the rat race of our stressful urban lifestyles have all contributed to making the glorious practice extinct, and the nation is a whole lot poorer for it.

But all is not lost. Over at the CA Secretariat, there is no hurry to get the constitution finished anymore, so the entire staff has been rendered unconscious. Nearby, at the **Ministry of Rest and Recreation** senior civil servants have been caught napping at their desks, and keeping the tradition of national siesta alive.

This Holi Week, the Ass was glad to see that we respect our hoary past and rich heritage by getting stoned out of our minds and lobbing lolas filled with Bagmati effluent at damsels on the sidewalks totally soaking them from head to toe. Hahahahahaha! (*Blood-curdling laughter.*) So fun.

If, god forbid, Holi disappears we will no longer be able to dab war paint on our faces and prowl neighbourhood streets ambushing innocent passersby and rubbing toxic red powder into their eye sockets. Har-de-har-har! (*Boisterous chortle and guffaw.*) So laughable, yar.

However, it is my sad duty to bring to my mirthful readers' notice that these fun and games, these magnificent customs, may soon be a thing of the past. They are now under threat from a spoilsport administration that has announced that those hurling water balloons in the restricted area in front of the CA building will be tear gassed. Miscreants will be nabbed on the spot on a first-come-first-serve basis so that no untoward incidents take place.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

I am so sad at the state of Nepal.



I will change my country!



I'll just sit here and watch India vs. West Indies





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