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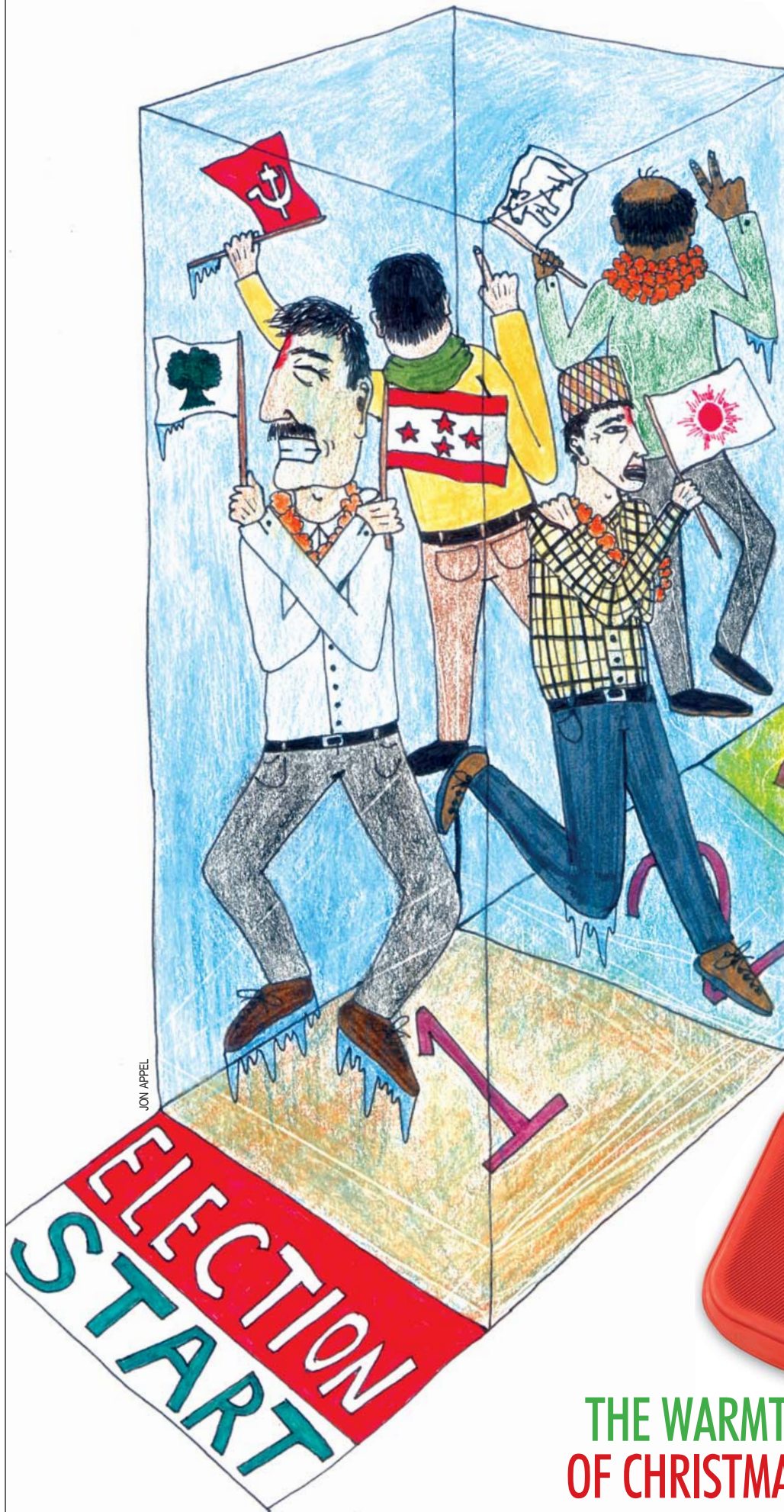
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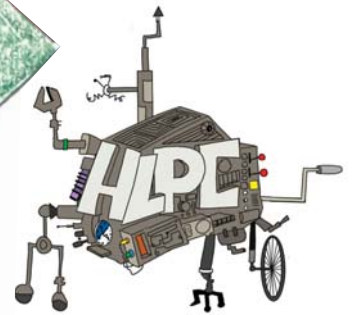
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WINTER FREEZE

The High Level Political Committee is inherently undemocratic, it does not respect the result of the election and will hinder the chance of a coalition government being formed anytime soon. As the two parties that espouse peaceful democratic change and the parties that got the most votes, the onus is on the NC and UML to take the lead together and set an example. Membership of the HLPC allows the Maoists to exert far more influence than its diminished mandate allows. This week, Dahal and Co finally realised their folly and have stopped talking about a boycott of the CA. But it may be premature to break open the champagne just yet, we are still frozen on Step 1 after the election.



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From Kathmandu to Europe with Europe's Best



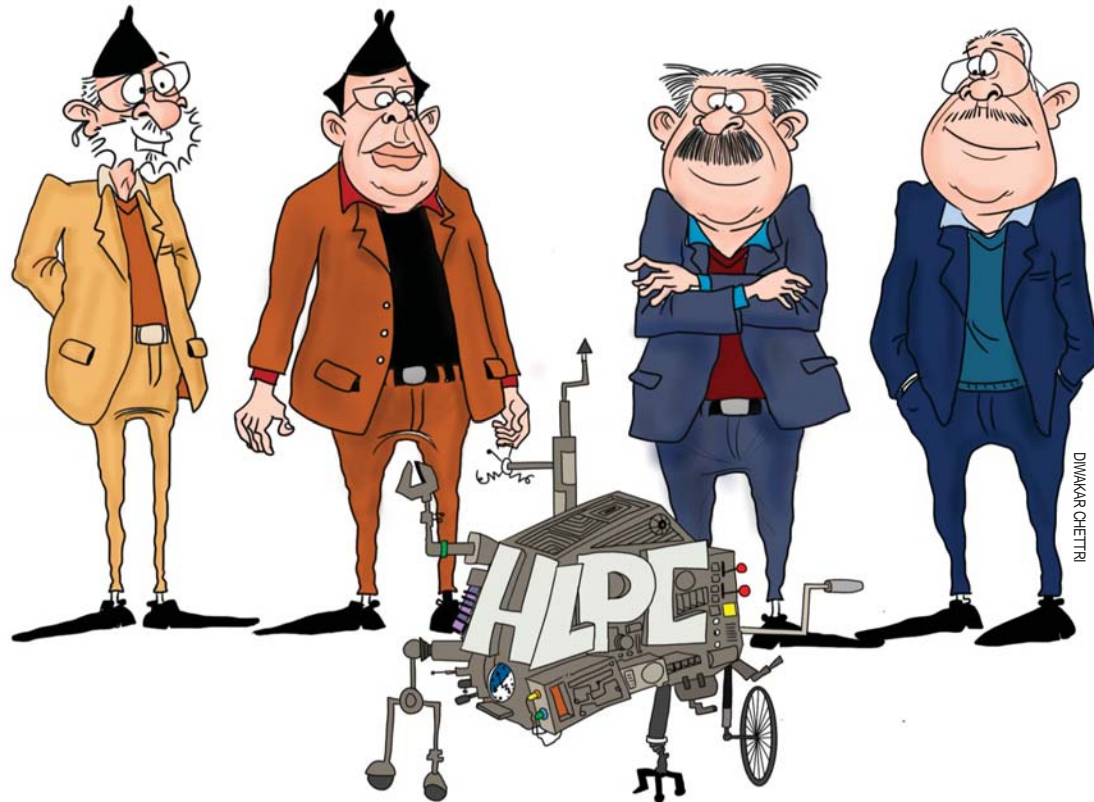
WRONG MECHANISM

When the four-party cartel made up of the Nepali Congress, UML, the Maoists, and the Madhesi Front agreed on their 11-point deal last February to end the political deadlock, they envisioned a mechanism to short circuit decision-making. Clause 2 of the deal that was struck states that a High Level Political Committee would be made up of top leaders of the four forces to 'hold timely elections, work towards a consensus among the political parties, consult with and advise the interim electoral council ...'

Nowhere in that agreement does it state that the HLPC would be resurrected after elections. A new mandate from the people does not mean going back to an antiquated and obsolete agreement by miraculously bringing the mechanism back from the dead. Far from forging a consensus, as is argued, the HLPC prolongs the political uncertainty and adds insult to injury to the results of the 19 November elections.

It is clear that the UCPN (M) was for reviving the HLPC because it meant the party could maintain its dominating influence over political decision-making despite its stinging electoral rebuke. For the NC and UML, as the two largest parties, the committee has become a convenient way to buy time to paper over mutual differences over power-sharing. It is a shame that the two biggest democratic forces should choose this undemocratic path just because they can't agree on the formation of a new government. The Nepali public dutifully went to vote when asked to and gave the parties another chance to prove themselves. But the NC and UML are showing the same irresponsibility that we have come to expect of them.

Nothing has changed after the elections: the four-party syndicate is repeating history as a farce



All the political parties, from the Maoist left to the royalist right, are facing severe internal pressures from cadre to be included in the Proportional Representation lists of their parties. A process that was designed to make the new Constituent Assembly more inclusive has become a cynical exercise for the pursuit of allowances and other perks of CA membership. The HLPC has

become a convenient way for the party leadership to sidestep those pressures and use it as an excuse for the delay in finalising the PR list.

The Interim Constitution requires the CA to sit within 21 days of the announcement of the final results of the elections after a new prime minister calls for it to convene. Far from the CA sitting, we don't even have an agreement on a new government and who is to head it. The people are asking: how can parties who can't even decide on whom to nominate to the CA agree on the thorny clauses in the new constitution?

The UCPN (M) leadership, especially Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, has still not come to terms with his poor showing. He has threatened to boycott the new CA unless there is an independent inquiry into alleged election rigging. Membership of the HLPC allows Dahal and his party to exert far more influence than his diminished mandate does. This week, Dahal and Co finally realised their folly and have stopped talking about a boycott. But it may be premature to break open the champagne just yet.

The HLPC is inherently undemocratic, it does not respect the result of the election and will hinder the chance of a coalition government being formed anytime soon. As the two parties that espouse peaceful democratic change and the parties that got the most votes, the onus is on the NC and UML to take the lead together and set an example.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

NEPALI NELSON

Pushpa Kamal Dahal could have been Nepal's Nelson Mandela, had he rose above party politics and kept the country's interest before his own ('A Nepali Nelson', Trishna Rana, #685). Alas he just turned out to be another 'mandalay'.

Harka

- There is no Nepali Nelson in the offing. Nepal has been turned into a country where her own saints are kicked in the back and a devil from outside is worshipped.

Danny

- I wonder why Nepalis don't consider BP Koirala the founding father of modern Nepal? Perhaps someone could give a small history lesson on why he has been relegated to the dustbin. BP did as much as he could, it's just that subsequent leaders could not uphold his principles, but that is not his fault.

Namah

- Nelson Mandela was, undoubtedly, an exceptional leader who bought together different sections of society and moulded South Africa into a rainbow nation. Yes, his term as president was marred with major debacles, but he had the foresight and humility to step down when things did not work out. Nepali leaders, on the other hand, fight for the kursi until their last

breath. Personally I have very low expectations from our politicians, so when they do mess up, I don't feel as disheartened as others.

GVR

- After the successful elections last month, I like millions of other Nepalis, was hopeful that the country's politics would finally come back on track and we could move ahead from five long years of stalemate. But with the parties pressuring the Election Commission to grant them a second extension to the deadline for submitting PR lists, we are back to square one and the euphoria has faded quickly. If the leaders wanted to run the country through the High Level Political Committee all along, why the charade of polls in the first place? At least we could have saved the Rs 50 billion election bill.

Sandhya Parajuli

- Nepalis would rather see a constitution made yesterday. But that is not going to happen. In fact, nothing is going to happen within a year. The wise man said: if you want different results, do things differently. But we want different results from the same people who have not (and are incapable of) learnt from their mistakes. So they will keep doing whatever it is that they are good at and we will keep

getting similar results.

- If there is indeed a provision in the interim constitution which says the president and vice-president will remain in office until the new constitution is drafted, then such a provision should be removed because it harms the democratic spirit. The Nepali Congress and likeminded people will want Ram Baran Yadav to continue in office to counter the inconvenience they could face in the future, even if it comes at the expense of democratic practice. But they cannot hold the country hostage for what they think are 'the top most priorities'. Since this second CA is meant for four years, there is plenty of time to deliberate over the future supreme laws of the land. No need to hurry; a half-baked constitution would neither serve the interests of the people nor guarantee stability. Instead we need a strong government with meaningful power-sharing agreements between the vast majority of newly elected parties.

Anonymous

ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY

Finally someone has recognised the power of local democracy in the 1990s and how it empowered local communities ('The roots of democracy', Editorial, #685). It would have eventually helped stem 'the rot at the top' as this editorial puts it so well. But what I am surprised about is how our 'progressive' civil society

B

stalwarts and donor expatriates have chosen to forget that achievement in their unquestioning support for the Maoist cause, even though the former revolutionaries proved how hollow their idealism was. And now after 17,000 lives lost, we have to start all over again to 'rediscover' grassroots democracy.

Ganesh R

HARAKIRI

Since Dahal failed his party miserably in the CA elections, he should hand over the reins to Baburam Bhattarai in the spirit of democracy that he always harps on ('Dahal's political harakiri', Muma Ram Khanal, #685). Failures are failures. The fig leaf has fallen and Dahal's loins are exposed. How long will Maoist followers and sympathisers have to wait for a new leadership in the promised new land called Nepal? Let General Bhattarai meet his destiny.

'Gheo chaku naran'

- Why is Muma Ram Khanal using Madhav Nepal as an example to argue that Dahal should step down as party chairman? Isn't Nepal the same man who became prime minister through back door channels? Is the writer telling Dahal to turn into one of those 'exemplary figures' in his list of 'most democratic personas of Nepal'?

Anonymous

41 YEARS AGO

The photos of the Valley from four decades ago remind me of the

Kathmandu I knew when I first moved there in 1983 ('The Valley from the air, 41 years ago', Kunda Dixit, #685). I know nothing stays the same, but there is no excuse for how Kathmandu has been destroyed by pollution and lack of city planning. I still love the city, but it makes me very sad.

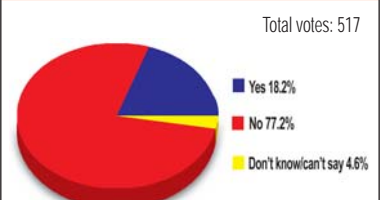
Margaret Kerr

CORRECTION

In 'The Red Heads' (Tsering Dolker Gurung, #685), it was erroneously said that red headed vultures were spotted for the first time in Nepal. But it was the first recorded sighting of their nests, not the birds. Also Krishna Mani Baral was wrongly called an oncologist (cancer doctor), he is an ornithologist, a bird expert.

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #686

C. Will women make up 33 per cent of the new CA?



Weekly Internet Poll # 687. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

C. Will the political parties be ready with their PR lists before new year?



The moment of truth

The newly elected legislature offers another opportunity for the country to confront the dirty truths of the conflict

“Don’t go so far, my son,” Mana Maya BK of Jogimara in Dhading recalls telling her son Raj Kumar 11 years ago. He was only 15 years old, an eighth grader who wanted to share the burden of his father. “Tell Baba I’ll come back with money, in time to sow maize,” he wrote in his three letters. But he never came back.

In February 2002, 17 innocent young men from the tiny village of Jogimara working as contract labourers to build an airport in Kotbade of Kalikot were killed by Nepal Army along with 20 other villagers suspected of being Maoist insurgents. Seven years after the conflict ended, the families have not got full compensation, nor have they been told who killed nearly all the young men in their village.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Pramila Shrestha whose brother Raj was also killed in the incident is angered and pained by the insensitivity of the state. “They did not even bother to tell

us that they killed my brother. We came to know about it through the radio after one and half month. My mother committed suicide because she couldn’t live with the grief. How come we aren’t even told who did it? Don’t we have the right to know?” she asks.

Last week, the families of the 17 Jogimara victims travelled once more to Kathmandu to seek truth and justice, ironically on International Human Rights Day. There was no media fanfare.

Seven years into the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord that promised a Truth Commission, the political parties are too scared to open the can of worms. There is an underlying fear among top Maoist leaders along with prominent NC leaders in power then and high ranking officers of Nepal Army and Police, who oversaw and overlooked war crimes, that they may one day have to answer for the atrocities. With both sides of the conflict now in legislative and executive positions, there is little hope that the new CA will form an impartial truth commission.



FINAL GOODBYE: Families of 17 young men, who were massacred in Kotbade in 2002, stand above the mass grave where the remains are buried. Their journey from Dhading to Kalikot 10 years after the incident was made into a documentary *Don’t go so far* by the ICRC.

Maoist governments promoted army and police personnel involved in the most egregious violations of human rights and the other parties have ignored Maoist perpetrators. The media, rights bodies, and international community cherry pick cases to suit their own agenda, without lobbying effectively for the formation of an independent commission that should be investigating cases on both sides.

“I have no hope from the so-called defenders of democracy in Kathmandu who are benefiting from our loss,” says Gita Rasaili whose 17-year-old sister Reena was dragged out of her house in Pokharichaur of Kavre at midnight on 12 February 2004, gang-raped, and killed. Two years before the incident Gita’s brother, a Maoist cadre, was killed by the army, because of which she joined the rebels. Reena was a hardworking student who volunteered for the government’s adult literacy program teaching elderly folks in her village.

For six days, the villagers mourned her death and refused to perform last rites, demanding that the guilty be punished. Devi Sunar who was also witness to the crime mobilised the villagers because of which they abducted her 15-year-old daughter Maina Sunar, tortured, and killed her in the army base.

For the 17 young men of Jogimara killed 800km away in Kalikot, for Reena Rasaili and Maina Sunar of Kavre, for journalist Dekendra Thapa of Dailekh, and Muktinath Adhikari of Lamjung, the elderly parents of Krishna Adhikari of Gorkha who are on extended hunger strike in Kathmandu, for the 36 bus passengers killed in Madi by a Maoist bomb, there has been no justice.

Only an impartial and empowered truth commission can provide effective redressal to the families, bring perpetrators on both sides to book, and assuage our collective conscience. But this needs public pressure and unbiased campaigning by rights activists, media, and international community.

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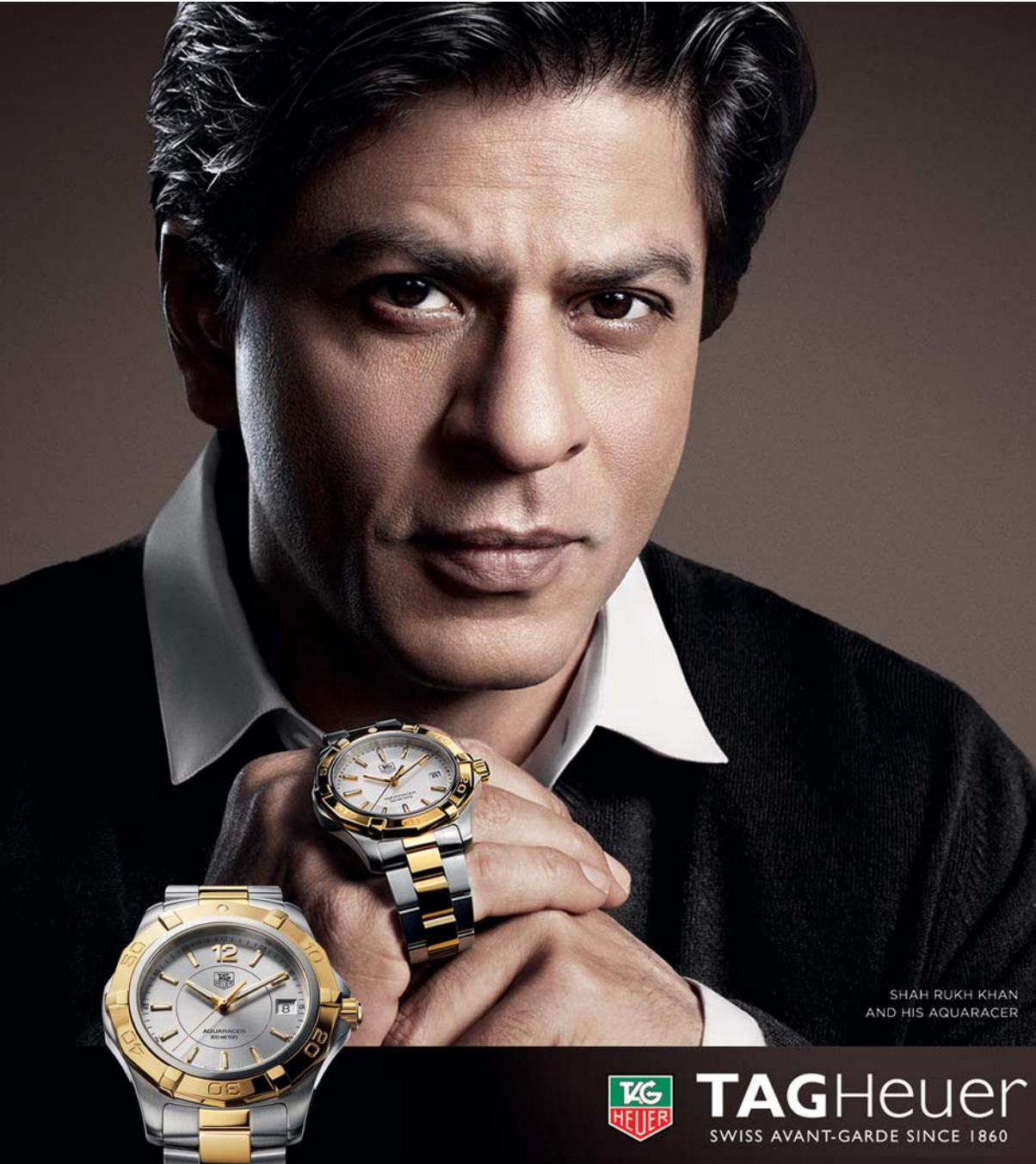
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MADHAV PRASAD POKHREL

The internet's rescue act

Skype, YouTube, and WordPress connect and preserve language diversity around the world

MARK TURIN

No one should be too surprised to overhear an endangered language spoken in the heart of Manhattan. New York City is home to more than 800 languages, more than a 10th of the world's total number of speech forms, the most linguistically diverse urban settlement on earth. The clicks and tones that a yellow cab driver just used on the phone to his cousin may well have been in a language that is endangered because their speakers have ceased to use them or are simply dying.

There is now cause for hope. While the dispersal of speech communities across the globe has led to the demise of some languages, technology popularised by globalisation is playing an equally important role in their revitalisation. Through the internet and mobile communications, people are reconnecting with fellow speakers using digital tools to revive languages on the endangered list.

Of the world's remaining 6,500 languages, up to half will no longer be in regular use by the end of this century. Grizelda Kristiña, the last surviving native speaker of Livonian, a

Uralic language, died in June 2013.

With the death of its last fluent speaker, the Bo language, one of the 10 Great Andamanese languages, became extinct in January 2010. Boa Sr had lived on the Andaman Islands her whole life, surviving not only the devastating tsunami of 2004 by climbing a tree, but enduring many waves of foreign invasion and disease that preceded it. Her language was of great antiquity and contributed to our understanding of humanity's linguistic heritage.

From 2005, Boa Sr worked with Anvita Abbi, professor of linguistics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, to document not only her language but also the cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge that it relayed. While Boa Sr's passing marked the loss of another speech form, a comprehensive archive of digitised audio, visual, and textual documents is now available for future generations.

Kusunda is one of more than 130 languages indigenous to Nepal. A language isolate, unrelated to any other known human speech form, Kusunda was until recently believed to be extinct. In 2004, members of the Department of Linguistics at Tribhuvan University made

STILL HERE: Kamala Khatri is one of the last remaining fluent speakers of Kusunda language, which was until recently believed to be extinct.

contact with a fluent speaker of Kusunda, resulting in the first grammatical description of this unique language. While effectively moribund, with little chance of becoming a popular vernacular again, the typologically distinct Kusunda language has now been carefully documented, even if its communicative power and the cultural world in which it thrived are lost for good.

It's easy to forget that most of the world's languages are still transmitted orally with no widely established written form. While speech communities are increasingly involved in projects to protect their languages – in print, on air, and online – orality is fragile and contributes to linguistic vulnerability. But indigenous languages are about much more than unusual words and intriguing grammar: they function as vehicles for the transmission of cultural traditions, environmental understandings, and knowledge about medicinal plants, all at risk when elders die and livelihoods are disrupted.

Many speakers of

endangered, poorly documented languages have embraced new digital media with excitement. Speakers of previously exclusively oral tongues are turning to the web as a virtual space for languages to live on. The internet offers powerful ways for oral traditions and cultural practices to survive, even thrive, among increasingly mobile communities.

Videos of traditional wedding ceremonies and songs are recorded on smartphones in London by Nepali migrants, then uploaded to YouTube and watched an hour later by relatives in remote Himalayan villages connected to the internet. Similarly, Skype and WeChat are powerful technologies that help sustain increasingly dispersed communities of speakers living across different time zones.

Community-based language documentation projects are increasingly bridging the digital divide by prioritising field-based audio-visual recordings and interviews with elders who still have fluency in the language, building online archives that protect cultural patrimony and establishing local cultural museums.

Effective managers of community documentation projects now worry as much about securing the right domain name and handle for their presence on YouTube, Twitter, Kickstarter, and Facebook as they do about traditional fundraising. Earlier editions of UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger were available only in print – expensive to produce, difficult to disseminate, and quickly out of date.

UNESCO's most recent atlas offers an online, interactive interface that allows users to contribute comments and suggest amendments, an example of effective crowd cataloguing. In such cases, digital technology

sustains conversation and facilitates wider participation, inviting contributions from community members and language speakers themselves.

Globalisation is regularly, and often uncritically, pilloried as a major threat to linguistic diversity. But in fact, globalisation is as much process as it is ideology, certainly when it comes to language. The real forces behind cultural homogenisation are unbending beliefs, exchanged through a globalised delivery system, reinforced by the historical monolingualism prevalent in much of the West.

Monolingualism – the condition of being able to speak only one language – is regularly accompanied by a deep-seated conviction in the value of that language over all others. Monolingualism, then, not globalisation, should be our primary concern.

For the last 5,000 years, the rise and fall of languages were intimately tied to the plough, sword, and book. In our digital age, the keyboard, screen and web will play a decisive role in shaping the future linguistic diversity of our species. www.yaleglobal.yale.edu



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and the Digital Himalaya Project.

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Microfinance's macro potential



SAM PANTHAKY/AFP

PRASHANT THAKKER

Microfinance is, at its heart, an effort to provide financial services to people who are not served – or are under-served – by the formal banking system. With appropriate, accessible, and fairly priced financial services, people can build their savings, cover the costs of unexpected emergencies, and invest in their families' health, housing, and education.

The International Finance Corporation estimates that microfinance has reached some 130 million people worldwide in the last 15 years. Over this period, microfinance has been lauded for its potential to advance financial inclusion and enable people to escape poverty. But it has also faced harsh criticism, with some lenders being accused of profiteering.

Despite the industry's widely publicised pitfalls, its potential to improve the lives of the poor cannot be ignored. The question now is how to ensure that microfinance becomes the industry that the world needs. To this end, three important steps must be taken.

The first step is better regulation. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) come in many forms – mainstream banks, specially licenced banks, non-financial companies, finance and leasing companies, non-governmental organisations, cooperatives, and trusts – and follow a variety of business models. All of these intermediaries must be recognised and regulated according to the needs of the economies in which they operate.

Inadequate regulation is most damaging to those who need microfinance services the most. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the 2010 microfinance crisis in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh – a hub of MFI activity – when a decade of explosive growth, fueled by aggressive and reckless lending

practices, came to a head.

The second step, to be taken by the microfinance industry itself, is to create effective mechanisms for assessing the industry's impact. As it stands, some governments and academics are uncomfortable with the fact that MFIs, which are supposed to be providing a public good by advancing financial inclusiveness, are pursuing profits.

But the failure of some MFIs to differentiate between profit-seeking and profiteering does not mean that sustainable microfinance should not yield returns above costs. The business of providing financial services to the poor requires commitment. Without profits, MFIs are unable to invest in the talent and product development needed to serve people for the long term.

Many governments have now implemented interest-rate ceilings and margin caps to curtail excessive profits for MFIs, while ignoring the margins of the market's non-organised alternatives, like pawnbrokers. In order to provide a more balanced

ON TIME: Officials from an Indian microfinance organisation receive a weekly payment installment from a borrower in the village of Vadod, Gujarat.

perspective on the microfinance industry compared to other kinds of financial-services providers, MFIs need to do more to measure and explain their social and economic value.

The third step concerns technology. Mobile connectivity is transforming the global financial system by enabling remote, rural populations to access financial services for the first time. Mobile-payment systems like M-Pesa are changing how people transfer, receive, and save money in many developing countries, including Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

For the microfinance industry, such systems represent an important opportunity, as they enable borrowers to apply for, receive, and repay loans on their mobile phones, using a network of local agents to deposit and withdraw cash. But without robust regulation, MFIs cannot make the most of these developments.

Although microfinance has already helped countless people worldwide, the World Bank estimates that some 2.5 billion adults still lack access to financial services. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders – including governments, regulators, banks, and civil society – to ensure that microfinance continues to be part of the solution. www.project-syndicate.org

EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS

New ride in town

Laxmi Intercontinental, the sole authorised distributor of Hyundai automobiles in Nepal, launched the new Hyundai Grand i10 at a function in the capital on Tuesday. The latest from the Korean brand aims to fill the gap left by its predecessor i10 and i20.



Designed at the Hyundai European design centre in Germany, the new hatchback embodies the company's globally acclaimed 'fluidic design' and comes equipped with a string of irresistible features.

"Hyundai has always put customer satisfaction first and with the latest offering, the company hopes to continue this and enhance its presence in the market," said Ganesh Bahadur Shrestha, the chairman of Laxmi Group.

Dream home

Pashupati Paints is extending its 'Win a Home' contest for another month. The competition, which was announced in September, is open to buyers of Pashupati Paints who will receive scratch cards on purchase of any of the company's products. The holder of the lucky number, chosen by a computerised software, will win an apartment in the city.



Youth meet

The third edition of South Asian Youth Conference kicked off on 15 December in Kathmandu. The six-day conference was inaugurated by chairman of Council of Ministers Khil Raj Regmi.



Winter wins

Syakar Trading has announced a new scheme 'Enlighten your life.' As per the scheme, customers can win a carry bag, jacket, and wall clock on the purchase of Honda generator and power products below Rs 150,000 and a luggage bag and jacket on purchases above Rs 150,000.



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Nepal's Three Curses

The country's rapidly ageing population is caught in the vortex of politicians, bureaucrats, and donors

The first curse of Nepal's governance is domestic political failure, resulting in poor governance and continued destitution of this country's long-suffering citizens.

The chronic mindless misconduct of politicians masquerading as 'the people's representatives' is leading to another squandering of the electoral mandate. The horse-trading, wheeling-dealing, and backroom bargaining prove that the so-called rulers of Nepal have learnt nothing.



GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha

The second curse is also internal: the bureaucracy that we are saddled with. Civil servants are inspired by a similar penchant for power and pelf as their political masters, but without any need for accountability. No one elected them, so they seem to be answerable to none.

The third curse has to do with the omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent donors. Although the stated goals of most donor agencies remain essentially altruistic, their field officers often allow the saviour syndrome to get into their head. While the expat community, by definition, remains relatively handicapped on account of its transient nature and lack of sufficient familiarity with the depth and diversity of Nepal's developmental experience, this has never deterred it from trying to create its own monuments.



SIMONE D MCCOURTIE/WORLD BANK

MAKING IT COUNT: An elderly woman participates in a community discussion on water supply and sanitation in Kaski.

'accelerated development of the ultra poor' through equitable distribution of resources.

In paper, the forums are supposed to be made up of representatives of various interest groups in the ward such as women, children, farmers, and the ultra poor. But since most of them are not organised in the communities, such 'representatives' are indeed handpicked by the feudal elite who tend to dominate such community discussions.

In addition to structural problems, these so-called citizens' fora are largely superfluous and often generate conflict. While they too adopt the same infrastructural projects such as building and rebuilding roads or schools and so on (calling into question the ultra poor related goal), they have no money of their own and recommend them to the VDCs for funding where it is the 'all party mechanism' that decides. So with the MFALD swearing by what has been fed to it by the donor consortium, Nepal's senior citizens continue to be deprived of the 10 per cent welfare formula.

Nepal's women, children, and marginalised have long suffered the brunt of the Three Curses, now it is the turn of the elderly. 🇳🇵

Bihari Krishna Shrestha is an anthropologist and a retired civil servant.

Local officials, of course, are only too willing to go along with the donors' flavour of the month fancies in exchange for material incentives and junkets. Although expat donor officials are generally assisted by national professionals, the latter in their bid to make the most of their lucrative employment often end up becoming holier than the Pope.

It goes without saying that there are many exemplary foreign and local officials who are thoughtful, listen to what locals have to say, and encourage their participation in activities designed to be catalytic. There are remarkable examples of foreign supported interventions that have had sustainable and long-lasting impact in raising the living standards. All of them worked because they encouraged

participation and let local people own the process.

Sadly, the latest victim of the Three Curses is Nepal's elderly. The country has a rapidly ageing population with 8.24 per cent (2.2 million people) over 60 years. As life-expectancy increases and birth rates fall, this proportion will grow to 20 per cent or more in the next two decades. Nepal's mostly mountainous topography and predominantly rural character would make its ageing population far more challenging to manage.

Learning from the widely applauded effectiveness of community user groups in forestry and child survival, a consortium of organisations working with the elderly has adopted the concept of Senior Citizens User Groups to empower older people to help themselves. Three months

ago, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MWCSW) welcomed and endorsed the approach. Since the local bodies' legislation already requires the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MFALD) to earmark a proportion of annual development grants for senior citizens, the MWCSW requested 10 per cent of the money to be used by proposed senior citizens' user groups.

The top brass of the MFALD, however, has delivered an oral verdict that its policy of 'social mobilisation' precluded such a 'targeted approach'. Further investigation revealed that in 2010 four donor agencies (UNICEF, DFID, SDC, and UNDP) had 'advised' the ministry to promote a 'novel' institution in the VDCs: the Ward Citizens' Forum, presumably to achieve

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25th December

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There are no major westerly fronts in sight, so we will continue to have hazy afternoon sunshine and clear weather only around New Year. Some high altitude cirrus riding the jet stream will flash by, which will raise the minimum temperatures somewhat over the weekend, but nothing to worry about. The temperature in Kathmandu will plummet to lows of 3-4 degrees in the morning with thick fog until noon.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
13°	13°	16°
9°	7°	7°



THE SOUND OF OUR SOUL

A singer from Kalimpong revives our love for Nepali folk songs with his earthy jhyaure melodies

the 33-year-old stands out from his contemporaries. Although the songs are minimalistic, Bipul's poetic lyrics about the city where he grew up and his surroundings bring us closer to home. As he poignantly rekindles the nostalgia he feels for his past, listeners are pulled into his reality, making us experience Bipul's emotions and thoughts as our own.

While most of us stumbled across Bipul around nine months ago when he first uploaded *Wildfire* on SoundCloud, a German-based online audio platform, the singer's journey began during his young days at St Augustine's School in Kalimpong. He later got a diploma in classical guitar from Trinity College, London. "Music was something that came easily to me since I was a kid. It was this incredible discovery that I was never tired of doing and talking about," he wrote to us in an email. "Music gave me a sense of identity and influenced my life in a way that I could not have imagined."

Taking inspiration from his day-to-day life to compose music, the earthy jhyaure melodies that Bipul creates perfectly encapsulate the Nepali folk-rock genre and are hugely popular among Nepalis both at home and abroad as is evident by the outpour of support on his SoundCloud account. To fans, his music is 'soul-gasm' because the artist pours his heart out to make music not just for our ears, but also our souls.

"The best part of my job is the love and warmth I get from the audience. It feels incredible to know that my songs have touched so many souls and that I can bring a smile to the faces of complete strangers. It is overwhelming," he admits.

Bipul, who currently heads the Arts Department at Vasant Valley School in Delhi, is working side by side on his album *The Sketches of Darjeeling*, slated to release early next year in the Indian capital. While the music teacher has kept a low profile so far, performing only at select fundraising events, he says he is really excited to sing in front of Nepalis in Nepal soon. 🇳🇵

AYESHA SHAKYA

Out beyond Bollywood hits, American pop, and adhunik Nepali songs, which are more often than not an amalgamation of the other two, is Bipul Chettri's music.

The tinkling of cow bells and the soothing interlude of 'om mani padme hum' in his latest offering *Mountain High* has echoes of the Himalayas. "*Mountain High* is about my spiritual home, a place where my soul rests in peace, a place where I am pulled by a strange sense of familiarity," explains Bipul. "The song is about the outer mountains reflecting the mountain of love and compassion within me."

In *Asaar*, the singer reminisces about a loved one and recreates the gentle monsoon mood from his hometown of Kalimpong, India with the gentle strumming of his guitar. *Wildfire*, which introduced Bipul's music to listeners and gained him loyal fans, is more upbeat. He says the debut song was inspired by the wildfires of Darjeeling and also depicts the dreams and passions raging in his heart.

In an industry where artists hesitate to embrace their roots,

nepalitimes.com

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EVENTS

CLIMATE+CHANGE, an awe-inspiring educational science exhibition about climate change and Nepal's Himalaya. *December to April, Nepal Art Council*

Tell your story, make a 1-2 min video about how girls are changing the world; contest open to girls aged 12 to 25, winner takes \$10,000. *Deadline 31 December, www.letgirlslead.org*

Tree of life, an exhibition of the paintings on the Mithila cosmos by SC Suman. *Runs till 6 January, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal*

Child and family photography workshop, learn how to take photos of your child before it grows up. *Rs 3,500, 19 to 21 December, 7 to 9.30pm, 9841279544/9841240341*



MAGHE SANKRANTI, a month of reading Swasthani, a pilgrims' tales of the Kathmandu Valley of yore. *15 January to 14 February*



GODAWARI CALLING, celebrate Alumni Day and reminisce the sublime and the ridiculous of your schooldays with fellow Godawarians. *28 December, 10am onwards, St Xavier's School, Godawari*

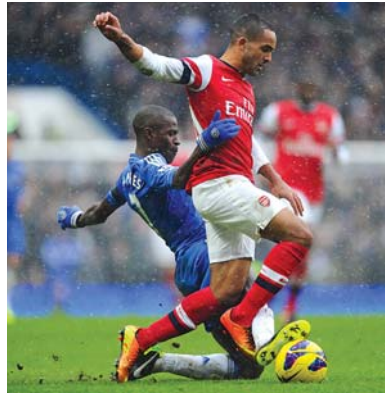
Merry Christmas, deck the halls with bows of folly. *25 December*

Early days, a workshop for new photographers and hobbyists who want to explore possibilities of a career in photography, free gift hamper worth Rs 1000. *Rs 2,999, 25 to 31 December, 7 to 9 am, Image Park, New Road, 9841279544, 9841240341*

Narratives of faith and memory, an exhibition of paintings on the lost

sculptures of Kathmandu by Joy Lynn Turner. *Runs till 21 December, 10am to 4pm, Patan Museum, www.kathmanduarts.org, (01)5544880*

Winter camp, give your children a chance to make good use of their holidays by learning music, arts, and drama. *29 December to 10 January, 10.30am to 4.30pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, www.katjazz.com.np*



PAYBACK, after the disappointment of a 6-3 loss, league leaders Arsenal host Chelsea. *24 December, 1.45am*

DINING

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

Cafe Beyond, delicious, simplistic take on Korean main courses and snacks are a refreshing change. *Bhaktapur Darbar Square*



BUBBLY BRUNCH, the best of the Mediterranean in shawarma and pasta. *Rs 1,100, 11am to 3pm, Shambala Garden and Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat, (01)4412999 ext. 7520, 7515*

Chef Caroline, exquisite food, glorious sunshine and more. *9am to 10pm, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070/4187*

Laskus Restaurant, welcome to the best taste your palates can get. *Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel (01)4700800, info@ktmgh.com*

Tass and Tawa, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. *Pulchowk, Kathmandu*

Golden Dragon, breathing fire, roasting duck. *Jhamsikhel*



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

Little Italy, go vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special, chocolate bomb. *Darbar Marg*

Chopstix, try the famous drums of heaven and other savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to impress. *Kumaripati, (01)5551118*

Pack my lunch, mother's cooking delivered to your doorstep. *9803496546, www.facebook.com/packmylunchnepal*



GOLDEN DRAGON, breathing fire, roasting duck. *Jhamsikhel*

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MUSIC

Party!, celebrate Christmas with the makers of jazz music in Nepal, solos, combos, choir, food, and goodies. Free entrance, 21 December, 12pm onwards, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np www.katjazz.com.np

Christmas jam, live concert by Adrian Pradhan and Sabin Rai. 24 December, 6pm onwards, Tamarind Restro, Jhamsikhel and Embassy Restaurant, Panipokhari



CADENZA LIVE, spend your Christmas Eve dancing to Afro-Nepali funk jazz. Rs 500, 24 December, 8pm, Jazz Upstairs, Lajimpat

Shastriya Sangeet, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon night. 1 January, 3.30pm, Ram Mandir, Battisputali

GETAWAYS



DHULIKHEL MOUNTAIN RESORT, turn a new leaf by taking advantage of New Year's offer. Per person with bed, breakfast & dinner, double/twin for Nepali/expats/foreigners at Rs 5,000/USD 75/USD 85 and single supplement for Nepalis/other nationals at Rs. NRS.1500/USD 15, taxes extra. Reservation: (01)4420774/6, (011)490660, sales@dmrnepal.com, reservations@dmrnepal.com

Park Village Resort, take advantage of the Christmas offer for Nepalis and you just might win a two-day three-night stay in Pokhara. 24 December, Rs 2,499 for individuals, Rs 9,500 for couples

Glacier Hotel, good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa. Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61)-463722, www.glacierenepal.com

Waterfront Resort, spend your Christmas Eve at the lake city of Pokhara and you might win a trip to Bangkok. 24 December, Rs 1,999 per head, Rs 8,500 per couple

Belle France

Another month brings a host of activities at the Alliance Francais Centre

The shortest day, screenings of various French shorts on the occasion of the shortest day in the year. 21 December, 10.30am to 7.30pm

Playing on the earth, submit two photos to this competition and you just might end up



being featured in a Parisian gallery. Submit by 24 December

Andromakers, the all girl duo charm you with their jingles. Rs 200, 13 January, 6pm, Café des Arts

Salut, be one of over 550,000 students all over the world to learn the French. Session starting on 27 January

<http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np/>

Seed freedom, food freedom



The food security problem may be deepening, but there is no shortage of controversy regarding some of the so-called 'solutions'. Activists say genetically modified food will be the ruin of agricultural countries while experts and businesses say there is no other viable alternative. What is the future of Nepal in the era of Monsanto? Join world renowned environmental leader Vandana Shiva's lecture on the impact of free trade agreements and subsequent movements to safeguard seed freedom.

22 December, 3pm, The Shanker Hotel, Lajimpat

Education for peace



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

- 20 December Abu Khairani, Tanahun
- 22 December Myagdi, Beni
- 24 December Gagan Gaunda, Kaski
- 29 December Patan Darbar Square

nepalaya.com.np, (01)4412469/4437893

LOSAR

Nepal's communities celebrate the lunar new year in the following months.

- 30 December, Tamu Losar, Gurung New Year
- 15 January, Maghi Parba, Tharu cultural holiday
- 31 January, Sonam Losar, Tamang New Year
- 2 March, Gyalpo Losar, Tibetan New Year



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HOLIDAY BITES

The festive hues of red and green may be missing from much of the city, but bakeries around town are compensating for their absence with an array of popular Christmas specials



CAFÉ HESSED

Known for its delectable doughnuts and cupcakes, the café is bringing in Christmas with festive themed cupcakes. For some, the sweet treats may just be too pretty to bite into.
Jhamsikhel, 9803608601

HERMANN HELMERS

Hermann's has probably the best assortment of Christmas specials. With the heavenly smell of freshly baked goodies wafting through the kitchen, it is a treat just to be inside the bakery during the holiday season.
Jhamsikhel, 5524900



WARMING THE COCKLES

As Kathmandu prepares for yet another nippy winter without electricity, let alone central heating, *Nepali Times* recommends ways to stay warm inside your home



Firewood stove

Remember the old days when everyone sat around the fire and grandmother gave out ladlefuls of soup? Well, you can replicate this open hearth procedure by installing a firewood stove in your living room. The stoves are cheaper in the long run than burning electric and gas heaters, but take heed to reduce emissions and increase efficiency by burning, always at a low flame, only dead wood.
Price: Rs 100,000



Biomass briquettes

Fuel prices rose drastically in the last five years and, encouragingly, so did the use of biomass briquettes. As a heating alternative to traditional energy sources, briquettes are an almost win-win acquisition. Not only are they made from waste, but also emit less smoke than wood and cost (in both financial and environmental terms) far less than petrol fuel. Warm your feet, boil your soup, heat your rooms.
Price: Rs 30 a piece
Burn time: 40 minutes per piece





PUMPERNICKEL BAKERY

A favourite among locals, backpackers, and expats, Pumpernickel will be baking batches of Christmas cookies this holiday season.
Thamel. 4259185

JULIE'S CAKES AND PASTRIES

A sinful assortment of Swiss chocolates on display will make any human cry out in delight.
Kupondole, 5539862

JUST BAKED

Although this neighbourhood hotspot will not roll out any Christmas specials



this week, patrons can still enjoy the ever dependable pastries, cakes, and buttery cookies.
Old Baneshwor, 9808663505

FUJI BAKERY

The increased loadshedding hours has deterred the owners from taking a risk with Christmas orders, which only gives us one

more reason to binge on Fuji's supremely delicious sour creams.
Chakapat, 5260678

GERMAN BAKERY

Ditch their universally loved rich chocolate cake and pick up a Christmas stollen cake for all to share.
Jawalakhel, 5523789

EUROPEAN BAKERY

The busiest bakery in this residential neighbourhood will be serving some traditional Christmas delights. Anyone up for rich fruit cake?
Baluwatar, 4422047

HIGHER GROUND BAKERY

Linked to the Higher Ground Café in Jawalakhel, this bakery employs women at risk. On its shelves are Christmas cookies and cakes.
Bhanimandal, 5528505



Made in Nepal

Two home produced chocolates maybe the best Christmas gifts this season

Sristi Joshi Malla started Moni's Creations in 2005 to produce handmade stained glass, beads, candles, and chocolates. "It all started as a hobby, but with time it grew into a business," explains Malla, who sells her world-class chocolate and other handicrafts as corporate gifts during festivals, as wedding and birthday presents, and during Christmas.

Moni's Creations has something of a cult following among discerning Kathmandu locals and expats for its uniquely flavoured chocolates in custom-made boxes. A favourite is the silky smooth truffle and other specialties that Malla created with inspiration from trips abroad, are chocolates with almond, mint, butterscotch, cappuccino,

crunchy cracker, and other tempting fillings.

A relatively new player in the market, Columbus Chocolates makes delicious dark chocolates which are produced at a factory in Gwarko. The reasonably priced chocolates are currently sold at three outlets in Patan: Namaste Department Store, Home Grocer, and Shrestha Food. Besides chocolate bars, Columbus also produces special gift boxes on order. If you want a taste of these home produced delights, head to St Xavier's school this weekend, where the makers are running a stall.

Moni's Creations
(01)443 21 22
Boxes start from Rs 400 onwards

Columbus Chocolates
9851143300

China heat

From Taplejung to Kanchanpur, Chinese-made goods are making a name for themselves as thermal solutions. Here's our pick for cold Kathmandu nights:

- Lay out an electric mattress (Rs 1,500) beneath your bed sheet and plug it in half an hour before you go to bed. Comes with regulator.
- Coming in single and double sizes, these velvet-covered fibre-filled quilts (which could mean either polyester or eiderdown) start from Rs 2,000 and above.
- Fill hot water bags (Rs 500 and onwards) with boiling water and tuck them into bed for turbo heat. Be careful to leave out one fourths unfilled and eliminate air while screwing the plug.
- On days when you need to take a bath, but the sun refuses to shine to work your solar panels, immersion heaters (Rs 500) are essential.
- Some days will be so cold that you will feel your woollen pants need extra help. Enter tights (Rs 1,000 and above). After all, why should girls have all the fun?

Chinatown Supermarket, Sundhara



Gas heaters

With half of Kathmandu's offices burning generators during loadshedding hours, electric heaters seem redundant during the dry season. But as long as cooking gas is available, at whatever price, gas heaters are rupee for rupee a better investment. Equally handy in offices and living rooms.

Price: Rs 6,000 upwards
Burn time: 100 hours on a 15kg cylinder



Catching Fire

After the onslaught of the *Twilight* films (although I will admit that I watched every single one and that too in the theatres) it is a relief to finally have a franchise that gives us intelligent and capable protagonists with a sense of humour. Kristen Stewart's annoying and glowering

on to the good stuff: *Catching Fire* is the second instalment in the *Hunger Games* quartet (there will be two more films after this one based off of the three books by Suzanne Collins). While the first film was captivating enough, this second film rises above the usual 'film for young adults' category in a detailed and spirited adaptation of what are a thought provoking series of books.

Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mallark (Josh Hutcherson) have survived the 74th annual Hunger Games (a horrific tournament/reality show where a boy and a girl from each of the 12 districts must compete to death, with only one coming out alive) and miraculously both have come out alive - saved by their love for each other - a gimmick that their mentors came up with in order to try and salvage both their lives.

Katniss' bravery during the previous games has made her a symbol of rebellion - the mockingjay pin that she wears

becoming the code for all who wish to stand up against the might of the horrifyingly suppressive Capitol.

Katniss and Peeta are forced to tour the districts as the victors of the past year's Hunger Games. On their tour, they are confronted with open rebellion and people raising their hands in the two-fingered salute that has come to represent defiance and solidarity. As they witness increasingly more brutal acts of suppression by the state, they are also confronted with another, even more deadly turn of events (mild spoiler alert): the 75th Hunger Games will reap 'tributes' from among the previous surviving victors of the games. And so the horror begins again.

Catching Fire is therefore not a film for the weak of stomach. It deals with children being forced to kill each other and with a murderous state. One must also come to terms with a status quo that involves immense poverty, repression, and of course, hunger. While film is overall a voyeuristic medium where the audience is complicit with the protagonists in all their adventures - one can't help but be just a little bit more self-reflexive in a film like this which involves such truly grave subject matter.

So we root for Katniss and Peeta, willing them to live, but even as we do, we are aware of the inherent moral problems at the crux of this. Perhaps this is the greatest achievement of *Catching Fire*.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Bella Swan is a sadly flat and pathetically fragile character compared to Jennifer Lawrence's Katniss Everdeen - who embodies loyalty, integrity, strength, and as an added bonus: wields a fierce skill with a bow. The icing on the cake is that, although she does have, like Bella, two perfectly acceptable boys head over feet in love with her, neither of them is either a werewolf or god forbid - a vampire.

But I'll stop teasing and move

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HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

NEW FACE: A girls gets her face painted as a goddess before her performance at the parade marking Yomari Purnima festival at Basantapur on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

WINNERS: The cast and crew of *Indreni Khojdai Jada* (Chasing Rainbows) receive the award for the Best Fiction Film at the closing ceremony of Kathmandu International Film Festival at City Hall on Sunday.



BIKRAM RAI

DANCING DIVAS: Students of Rato Bangala School perform during the South Asian Youth Summit at Patan on Sunday.



DEVAKI BISTA

EARLY BIRDS: People take a morning stroll at Tikapur Park in Kailali district on Saturday.

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Indreni Khojdai Jada



REVIEW

If you are the type to dissect a movie based on its technical finesse, then you will find a lot of things wrong with *Indreni Khojdai Jada* (Chasing Rainbows), a feature by Sahara Sharma which was judged the best fiction film in the Nepali Panorama at the recently concluded Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival.

The poor post production makes this 88 minute long feature far from an easy viewing experience. The camera work is shaky and one wonders whether there would have been a different outcome had

the makers spent more than a month on shooting. But where Sharma strikes gold is in her storytelling. It is simple and resonates with the audience, so much so that we are willing to overlook the glitches and accept one of the most honest movies of our times.

The film revolves around three siblings who come to Kathmandu with the hopes of making it big. From the first scene, where the siblings are shown talking about their dreams of leaving the dingy two bedroom

apartment and moving someplace better where they won't have to worry about getting through each month with Rs 3,000, we are drawn into their lives. Instantly we feel for them and this connection deepens with the unfolding of each individual story.

The eldest played by Sanam Pyakurel is the responsible one, keeping track of the monthly expenses and making sure

everyone saves enough for the long awaited television set. In the youngest sister's role is first time actor Kritika Lamsal, who is perhaps the biggest dreamer with hopes of landing in the US on a diversity visa. Her attempts at perfecting the American accent make for some of the most heartwarming scenes in the movie.

The brother (Dipak Ghimire) is an underachieving student who dreams of owning a television so he can have his friends over for live football matches. Ghimire is perfect in his role as the playful brother whom everyone loves to hate and squabble with. His repeated suicide attempts (in consultation with Google) which include drinking Mentos candies and Coke are hilarious. Ghimire's character is the most well sculpted with Sharma balancing his funny antics with moments of deep reflection and emotion thereby avoiding over-the-top performances.

After numerous short movies, *Indreni Khojdai Jada* marks the wonderful silver screen debut of the talented filmmaker Sahara Sharma who has donned the hat of writer, director, and cinematographer for this particular movie. Our wait for a good storyteller has finally come to a dreamy end. **Bhrikuti Rai**



Mezze by Roadhouse

which promises a more eclectic menu than its café branches.

But pizza still makes up a large proportion of the menu and many of the toppings on offer are in fact eerily familiar. We tried one, the smoked salmon (Rs 650), just to check that standards weren't slipping. This pricey topping was still pretty generous and perfectly cooked - so far, so good.

The waiters were a little befuddled (the restaurant was only two weeks young at the time of the review), but seemed to cope well with the pressure of an all-new venue. There were some kinks to iron out: one didn't know exactly what the vegetarian mezze platter (Rs 650) consisted of, while another apologised for the delay while kitchen staff finalised the presentation of a dish no one had ordered before. But this was a busy Friday lunch service and overall, staff coped admirably.

That platter brought together freshly prepared hummus, mini pita breads, a baba ghanoush, cream cheese, and other goodies. The presentation was worth the wait, but for the price I'd have expected something a little flashier: the thimble of marinated olives felt especially like phoning it in.

A coriander-crust chicken



SOMEPLACE ELSE

PICS: PM

kabab (Rs 230) looked great, but for all the greenery on display, that fresh, floral flavour of the herb was oddly impossible to locate. The chicken itself was tough, dry, and overcooked. We finished off with a chocolate mousse (Rs 230) from a dessert menu entirely borrowed from - you guessed it - Roadhouse, which was rich, satisfying, and with a hint of liquor, but was neither light nor airy enough to really be called a mousse.

What's definitely new is the smart, modern interior and chic terrace with a view of the palace. The restaurant's sprawling and extensively stocked bar (surely one of the most eclectic in the city) and minimalist dining area

is a departure from the chintz of Roadhouse's other outlets and the chic outdoor seating might make you forget you're in Kathmandu at all. I'm told the lighting is great at night and there are plenty of halogen heaters to go round.

Don't expect wonders, but do expect a great atmosphere and location, friendly staff, and yes, reliably satisfying pizza. CC

How to get there: Mezze by Roadhouse is located on the top floor of the new Mercantile shopping mall, on the corner of Darbar Marg opposite the palace museum and the traffic police headquarters.

Many a long, cold winter's night has been spent debating the relative virtues of Kathmandu's two most famous pizzerias: Roadhouse Café and Fire & Ice.

These restaurants, while serving other Italian or Italianesque fare, have become synonymous with great quality pizzas baked in wood-fired ovens,

intimate lighting, Baskin Robbins ice cream, and waiting staff trained to bump up your bill with Himalayas OnTop when you'd happily take jar ko pani. While many restaurateurs have opted to ape this formula with varying degrees of success and Fire & Ice has maintained only one location in town, Roadhouse has branched out with a new brand, Mezze,



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The West Ridge Story

One of the movies screened recently at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival was *High and Hallowed: Everest 1963*. The documentary primarily deals with the stunning account of Willi Unsoeld and Tom Hornbein, two members of an American team, who climbed Everest using a difficult new route - the West Ridge. What many in the audience did not know is that Hornbein, now 83, is also a well-known doctor.

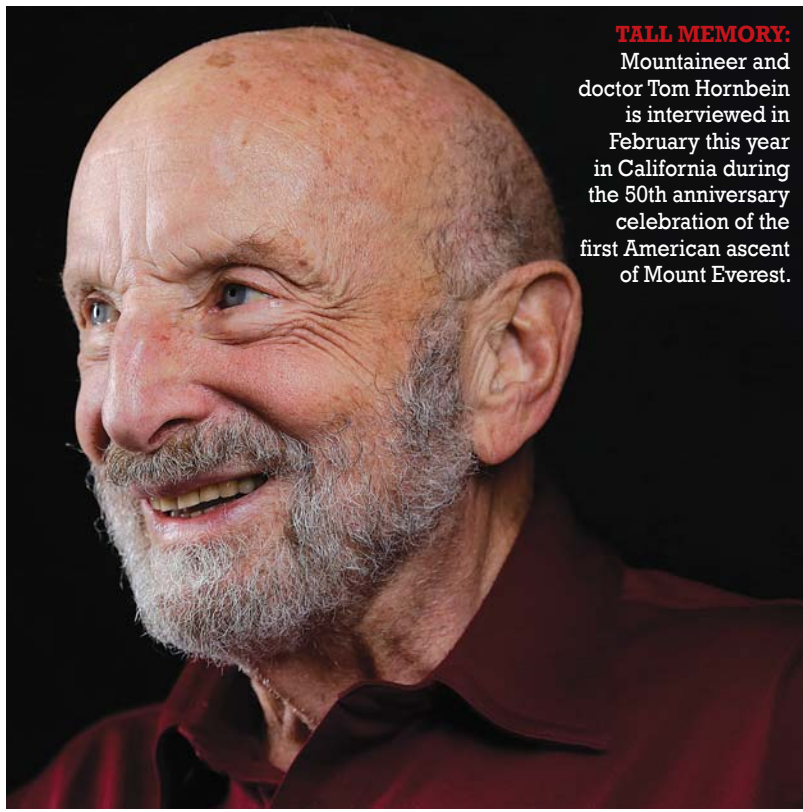


DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Hornbein and Unsoeld's successful climb of the West Ridge to reach the summit is truly a milestone in the annals of mountaineering. In fact Jon Krakauer, author of *Into Thin Air*, calls this feat the greatest Himalayan climb in US mountaineering history.

The 1963 expedition was the first attempt by the Americans to climb Everest. The team leader wanted to make sure they got to the top even if it meant using the South Col route that Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary had used a decade ago to become the first climbers to the peak. Only after the team scaled Everest using the reliable South Col route, did they decide to take on the dangerously difficult West Ridge.

Hornbein and Unsoeld were



TALL MEMORY:
Mountaineer and doctor Tom Hornbein is interviewed in February this year in California during the 50th anniversary celebration of the first American ascent of Mount Everest.

JEFF CHIU/AP

super keen to climb the infamous route on the mountain's west side. As soon as they heard that other members in their party had summited Everest, they were ready to go. What they did not realise is that the route they had picked, was almost impossible to conquer. But once committed and part way up the West Ridge, they discovered that there was no going back. The die had been cast. To this day, the West Ridge continues to be the ultimate man vs rock in Everest climbs.

The duo finally made it to the top by advancing through a couloir (a track, now called the Hornbein couloir) and reaching the summit at about 6.15 pm, a very late arrival time for safe descent. As Hillary famously said when asked if he believed George Mallory had scaled Sagarmatha before him, "It is important to safely descend the mountain to make it count." In fact, most climber deaths on Everest occur on descent after having successfully ascended the mountain.

On descent, the American climbers had to make a bivouac (a very basic shelter) at about 8,000 m without tents, sleeping bag, or supplemental oxygen. An important reason why they

survived the night and made history was because there was minimal wind on the mountain at the time. Obviously their relentless motivation to succeed helped tremendously.

Tom Hornbein went back to the US and became a professor and chairman of the department of anaesthesiology at the University of Washington in Seattle. Among the many young American doctors he trained was Dr Tom Fell, who came to Shanta Bhawan Hospital in the 1980s. Fell trained young nurses to become anaesthesia assistants. In many far-flung districts where there are no anaesthesiologists, these assistants play a crucial role in administering anaesthesia to patients so that surgeons can perform the required surgery. The Nick Simons Institute in collaboration with Nepal's Health Ministry has been working on this anaesthesia program for years.

After his Everest expedition, Hornbein never returned to Nepal. He says he cannot deal with the countless changes that have taken place here since 1963. Perhaps through his student Fell, he will be remembered not only for his West Ridge feat, but indirectly also for his contribution to medicine in Nepal. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Go pro

Renowned action camera manufacturer GoPro has come up trumps again with its latest offering, the Hero3+ Black Edition. Released in October this year, the Hero3+ is every adventure sports enthusiast's camera of desire and with its compact design and range of capabilities, it is easy to see why. Although the device weighs a mere 136 grams and is small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, do not be fooled by its minimalistic design because the simplistic exterior hides specs capable of churning out professional-quality, high-definition videos and incredibly detailed pictures of high-speed action.

The Hero3+ Black Edition ships with accessories tailor-made for adventure sports photography. A water-proof housing for the main camera is perfect for shooting in wet conditions and is water-proof upto 40 metres. Also bundled are one three-way pivot arm, one curved and one flat adhesive mount, and one quick release and one vertical quick release buckle, which all allow for flawlessly capturing of fast-paced adventure moments. GoPro has also included a Wi-Fi remote this time around, which is incredibly handy.

Accessories aside, the Hero3+ excels in what GoPro cameras do best: capturing professional-quality, incredibly-detailed videos and images of fast-paced action in all kinds of terrains and weather conditions. The option to record videos at a gorgeous 4,000K resolution (at 15 frames per second) is a nice one to have, although most of us might not currently own a TV capable of displaying resolutions that high. That being said, videos of high-speed



activities captured at a lesser 1,080p resolution at 60 fps, with the 'Ultra Wide' mode on also look amazingly crisp and detailed on normal HDTVs, with clear and natural sounding audio to match.

The Hero3+ is also capable of capturing detailed still images of fast-moving action at a respectable 12 megapixels, with the 'Time Lapse' mode particularly impressive. Media is stored on a microSD card, with the camera supporting cards with maximum capacity of 64GB, adequate for most users. Battery life is also good, with the Lithium battery capable of lasting more than two hours of continuous recording and more than five hours of moderate use. The free GoPro companion app for mobile iDevices, which allows for full remote control of the camera while also acting as a screen capable of live video previews, perfectly complements the gadget.

Retailing at approximately Rs 40,000, the best action camera, while not cheap, is worth the price. The more budget conscious among us might consider the Silver Edition, which offers slightly downgraded specs at Rs 10,000 less. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's Verdict: The Hero3+ is a must-have for adventure sports enthusiasts intent on perfectly capturing their stunts.

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Diminished by triumph

When activists get elected, they seem to emulate the politicians they despise

WRONG DIRECTION: Political activist Anna Hazare ended his indefinite hunger strike on Wednesday after a watered down version of the anti-corruption Jan Lokpal Bill was passed in both houses.

had framed months ago with Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan, who broke away from the ageing leader to participate in election despite his objection. The bill that the parliament adopted, retains government's control over the investigating agency entrusted with the task of probing allegations of corruption against public servants.

During the week Hazare sat on fast, he and his followers engaged in a heated exchange with AAP members. Ultimately, they were expelled from the site of fast, leaving none in doubt about the severing of relationship between AAP members and remnants of Team Anna who had together constituted the popular front against corruption. The relationship between the two had been strained for a while: Hazare had not only refused to campaign for the AAP in Delhi, but had even tried to undermine it.

Even Hazare, it seems, couldn't transcend such human attributes as envy, vanity, and pettiness. He committed the mistake of harbouring the belief that it was his charisma alone which was pulling the people whenever and wherever he sat to rail against the discredited UPA government. He forgot it was Arvind Kejriwal and his comrades who had provided him the national proscenium

to perform, inviting him from Maharashtra to lead the anti-corruption movement in Delhi.

Kejriwal decided to enter politics, defying Hazare who perhaps believed that minus the glow of his charisma, his pugnacious lieutenant was bound to eat the humble pie. Like the Congress, Hazare didn't have his fingers on the people's pulse. As the AAP began to gather momentum in the weeks before the polls, politicians adopted dirty tricks to stomp it. Hazare turned sullenly silent and then acerbic.

Around the time political parties of all hues began, rather hypocritically, to question the AAP's source of funds, Hazare too joined the chorus. He wrote a letter to Kejriwal claiming there were allegations against him to divert the money collected for the anti-corruption movement. Hazare said the AAP had been using his name in its campaign even though its leaders knew of his opposition to their participating in politics and that 'Anna SIM cards' had been sold and the proceeds misappropriated. To many it seemed an outwitted leader,

in pique, was backstabbing his lieutenants perched on the cusp of astounding success.

The AAP's strong showing also brought out Hazare's vanity. A day before he sat on fast on 10 December, journalists reminded him of his past observations that if he were to contest election, he would lose his security deposit as he did not command money and muscle power, considered essential for electoral success. Then came the stinging question: how did he then explain Kejriwal and the AAP's triumph?

Hazare paused for a while before saying that had he campaigned in Delhi, the AAP would have swept the polls and Kejriwal would have become chief minister. This was an incredible display of petulance and pettiness.

In accepting a watered down version of the bill and in provoking and criticising the AAP, Hazare has thrown in his lot with the political class, not because he believes in its rectitude and sagacity, but because he wants to weaken the lieutenants who have decidedly stolen a march over him. 🇮🇳

ashrafajaz@gmail.com

Indian political activist Anna Hazare has come to epitomise men who are diminished in their triumph.

For over two years, the septuagenarian Gandhian sat on fast and protests by activists who now form the nucleus of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to

week-long fast.

Yet, the adoption of the Jan Lokpal Bill for an ombudsman did not stop many from alleging that Hazare's triumph was pre-arranged, that he had gone on fast days before the winter session of parliament because the government had assured him it would put its weight behind the bill. This the government did because the AAP's astonishing performance in the Delhi Assembly had rattled India's entire political class including the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

People chose to see in the passage of the bill a tacit understanding between Anna and the mainstream parties. It was a watered down version of the bill that Hazare's team



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

press the Indian Parliament to enact a national ombudsman law to check corruption. After the AAP's strong showing in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, this demand was accepted and the bill passed in both houses on Wednesday. Hazare broke his



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BACK WHERE THEY BELONG

Nepal needs to be prepared before it demands the return of its stolen religious figures from foreign collections



12th century figure of Vishnu with Lakshmi and Garuda was stolen from Chyasalhiti, Patan in the late 1970s and is currently at Musée Guimet in Paris.



Dipankara Buddha stolen from Patan's Nag Bahal in 2001 was returned from Vienna, Austria in 2003.



Head of a 12th century Saraswati from Pharping, stolen in 1984, was returned from Los Angeles, USA in 1999. It is now at the National Museum Chhauni.



PICS: JÜRGEN SCHICK/LAIN S BANGDEL



11th century figure of Uma-Maheswor was stolen from Bhaktapur in 1984 and is currently at Musée Guimet in Paris.



12th century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor, stolen from Dhulikhel in 1985, was returned to Patan Museum in 2001 from Museum of Indian Art in Berlin.

BHRIKUTI RAI

Nathalie Bazin, the Chief Curator of the Himalayan Section at the Musée Guimet in Paris, made a dramatic announcement at an international conference in Kathmandu this week on the protection of Asia's heritage.

Her museum was willing to return to Nepal the priceless and exquisitely carved 11th century figure of Uma Maheswor that was stolen from Bhaktapur in 1984 and 12th century figure of Vishnu with Lakshmi and Garuda stolen from Chyasalhiti, Patan in the late 1970s. At that time, there was no record of the idols missing and Bazin says the Musée Guimet was willing to send the figures back as long as they would be displayed and not put under lock and key.

"The museum wanted to hand the Uma Maheswor and Vishnu back to Nepal earlier, but the discussions didn't go ahead," Bazin told *Nepali Times*, "we hope to overcome the frustrating and difficult delays and hopefully have the idol back in its country by 2015."

When it was stolen 30 years ago, the Uma Maheswor was being actively worshipped by devotees in Kathmandu Valley, like hundreds of other religious objects that were sold and smuggled out of the country in the great plunder of the 1980s when many temples were ransacked.

A 12th-century stone sculpture of Uma-Maheswor stolen from Wotol in Dhulikhel in 1985 had changed hands of many art dealers before ending up on a lonely pedestal in the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin. The 62cm limestone sculpture of Shiva and Parvati with attendant deities on Mount Kailash was an object of devotion and worship when it was stolen. The Berlin museum bought it from an art gallery in Wiesbaden in 1985 for about \$50,000. It was returned in 2000 and is now at the Patan Museum.

Many of Nepal's stolen religious objects have now been inventoried thanks to the painstaking work of art historians and researchers like Nepal's Lain Singh Bangdel and Jürgen Schick. Bangdel's 1989 book, *Stolen Images of Nepal*, and Schick's *The Gods are Leaving the Country*:



Art Theft from Nepal, have provided valuable pictorial documentation of the objects in situ in the temples and bahals of Kathmandu.

In the absence of reliable records at the Department of Archaeology (DoA), the two books are about the only proof that can help Nepal to demand the return of stolen artefacts.

Schick and Dina, Bangdel's daughter, were among 140 participants at the conference organised by UNESCO. Art scholars from Asia, Europe, USA, and South America discussed about possible regional and international collaboration among concerned stake holders to prevent illicit trading of cultural property. The event was picking up from where it left off after a previous meeting in 2001 that adopted the Kathmandu Declaration on the illegal trade in cultural property. That declaration urged the Nepal



government to update laws against trafficking in heritage property. But the conflict put everything on hold.

UNESCO head Axel Plathe now looks forward to strengthening transboundary cooperation to curb trafficking of cultural heritage. "The symposium's outcomes will foster our fight against illegal trade of artworks in South Asia. We made good progress to develop a common strategy for the prevention of illegal traffic and the restitution of illicitly traded objects," says Plathe.

Bhesh Narayan Dahal, director general of the DoA is confident about coming up with a comprehensive inventory by next year. "We are already working on the inventory and are still trying to convince local communities and families to help us with the documentation since many of the artefacts belong to families here," explains Dahal. The DoA has started working with the Crime Investigation Bureau and INTERPOL to track down stolen religious objects.

Foreign museums want guarantees that returned figures aren't stolen again

10th century figure of Uma-Maheswor (left) stolen from Gahiti in Patan in the mid 1960s is now at Denver Museum in the US. Whereabouts of the Chaturmukha Shivalingam (right) stolen from Dakshinamurti Tol, Deopatan around the same time remains unknown.

The whereabouts of the 17th century manuscript stolen from Patan Museum in 2003 is still unknown.



BOOKENDS

Art scholars on Himalayan and Southeast Asian art in the US helped identify four painted wood covers of palm-leaf manuscripts as the property of the National Archive in Kathmandu, which had been put up for auction to be sold at Christie's on 19 March this year at New York's Rockefeller Plaza. They were pulled out after objections from academics and specialists of Himalayan art. They were identified based on comparison with images in an inventory created by the Nepal German Manuscript Project in 1970. One of them is a 12th century wood cover which is believed to be one of the oldest known painted art objects in Nepal. They were returned to the National Archive in August.

when they are restored to their original temples. A 400-year-old manuscript hand-drawn in ink and watercolours was stolen from the Patan Museum in 2003. The manuscript made up of 21 accordion-like folios containing tantric depictions of the energy centres of the human body had been on sale along with two smaller ones in the antiquity market in Nepal and was bought with Austrian funds for Rs 90,000 and donated to the Patan Museum in 1997. The Patan Museum Project thought the museum would be the best place to keep it, not just for its historic and educational value, but also so that it would not be exported.

The copper repoussé Laxmi Narayan and Garuda figure that was stolen from the Sundari Chok in Patan has now been replaced with a replica even though the original was found and will eventually be out on secure display.

Jürgen Schick estimates that 90 per cent of rare and high quality idols have been stolen from Kathmandu since the 1960s. "The thefts have declined mostly because there isn't much left to steal," says Schick who first arrived in Kathmandu from Germany in 1973 as a tourist and was inspired to document the Valley's cultural wealth. "Nepal needs to get its act together to bring back its idols since many art galleries and museums now don't want their reputation at

stake by being associated with stolen art."

Scholars at the symposium said that when an idol that is still a part of everyday life in Kathmandu Valley is stolen, many customs, practices, and festivals also die off.

Says Dina Bangdel: "We need to create awareness that our religious images and paintings that are traded for thousands of dollars aren't just works of art to be displayed at a museum or a collector's living room, they are part of a living culture and tangible identity. We need to do our part to get them back home."

Bangdel is now an Associate Professor of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar and says it is important for young Nepalis to understand the importance of what has been lost in the last 50 years and the need to get the religious objects back.

She adds: "Now that our politics is finally back on track, we need to continue my father's work and start the task of bringing back Nepal's stolen artefacts."

nepalitimes.com

In the land of gods, #63, Patan's crown jewels, #517 Christie's remove stolen Nepal works, #648 Interactive map Interview with Jürgen Schick

Lost and found in Kathmandu



The 15th century stone sculpture of Lakshmi-Narayan (left) in Patan was stolen in 1984. The head of Saraswati (above), stolen from Pharping in the early 1980s, is currently at the Chhauni Museum.

JOY LYNN DAVIS

I have always been an artist, but when I visited Nepal in 2003, I felt an identity crisis. I finished a Bachelor's degree in art, however, I felt disenchanted with the contemporary art world. Much of what I had seen – even created – didn't move me, didn't do any good in the world, and wasn't accessible to a wide audience. I considered giving up art entirely.

But encountering the Kathmandu Valley, I was enamoured by the rich and meaningful cultural heritage kept alive by artists today. I was inspired to paint again and learn all I could about Himalayan art.

In 2006, I first noticed thefts of sacred art. Through research, I found a few publications: Lain Singh Bangdel's *Stolen Images of Nepal*, Jürgen Schick's *The Gods are Leaving the Country*, and Kanak Mani Dixit's *Gods in Exile*. They give striking photographic evidence of the thefts of 120 Buddhist and Hindu sculptures. They also

raised some unsettling questions: what has happened in those communities since the thefts, does worship continue, have replicas been made?

Since 2010, I started visiting sites of previously documented thefts. I recorded the memories shared by people and inquired about additional thefts. I kept a database, which will be published at www.rememberingthelost.com. I strongly feel devotees should be able to continue traditions of worship just like generations before them and artists should have access to exquisite works created by their ancestors.

My paintings in 'Narratives of Faith and Memory: Remembering the Lost Sculptures of Kathmandu' bridge present and past states of these sacred spaces by realistically depicting the sites as they look presently and then visually 'repatriating' the stolen sculptures back into those sites with 23 karat gold. The gold represents the commodification of the sacred and provides a visual language for identifying which sculptures have been lost. The paintings also convey the intangible – the relationships people have with the murtis and the longing they feel at their

absence.

Despite people's devotion and love for their local murtis, it is difficult to protect against theft. I am hopeful though, that through awareness and cooperation on all levels – in communities, with local government, and international laws and support – illicit trafficking of sacred cultural property can be slowed and the gods can safely live in their home communities again.

After exhibiting in Nepal, I intend for my paintings to travel around the world, offering people the chance to see where these murtis originate from and hear stories shared by those communities.

Joy Lynn Davis is currently an artist in residence at Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre in Patan. Her exhibition 'Narratives of Faith and Memory: Remembering the Lost Sculptures of Kathmandu' will run until 21 December at Patan Museum.

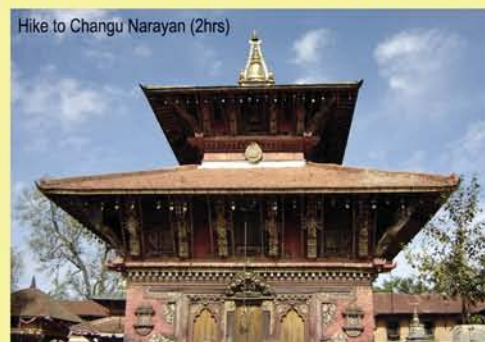
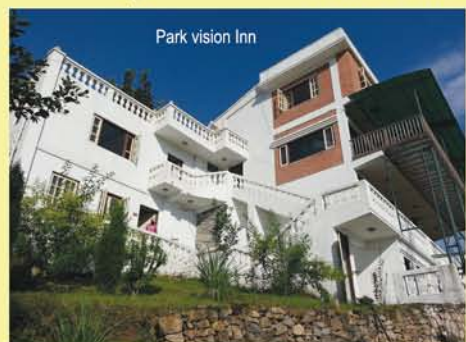
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What are some party procedures that you would like to see changed immediately?

First, we must make the discussions within our party more transparent and not hide our decisions from the public. Secondly, those who have been given the responsibility to talk with other parties and discuss possible alliances, must not go around giving speeches when not a single agreement has been reached. We must not fool the public like this.

How do you envision the CA will function this time round?

After the first session of the CA, we will have to create a timeline for writing the constitution within a year. Based on this, drafting committees will be formed and within two or three months, they will present a written report to the CA. Every party may not agree with the contents of the document, so we will spend the next two months trying to iron out differences. If there are still disagreements, they will be resolved through voting.

How hopeful are you of personal success in CA-II?

Last time, we took liberties in the name of consensus. This gave us some advantage, but ultimately led us nowhere. This time, if we as MPs can prevent the political discourse from spilling outside the CA, we will have done our job.

nepalitimes.com

Listen to interview

“Keep politics inside CA”

Interview with NC leader Gagan Thapa, *BBC Nepali Service*, 18 December



Rabindra Mishra: Do you agree with the NC holding multiple closed-door meetings?

Gagan Thapa: At the party's central committee meeting today, we decided that all political discussions must be held inside the CA because it is the most legitimate democratic instrument. We also told everyone present that our leaders must not run these parallel committees, a 'club' of sorts where few leaders from the main parties gather and make decisions without everyone's approval. The central committee members have presented a written proposal, which received a lot of support.

Who is 'we'?

Except the decision-makers at the top, almost everyone else who won direct elections in the 19 November polls is involved.

Your predecessors also raised similar issues, but senior leaders didn't take their proposals seriously.

All our friends who won the elections this time, remember the promises they made to their constituencies. We will not make the same mistake of keeping quiet if the party heads don't listen to us.

But all your friends seem to be siding with the top brass.

I have found that the same people who used to take this matter lightly and who now have come back with a mandate no longer think of it as a joke.

New beginning

Baburam Bhattarai, *Facebook*, 13 December

facebook

After our party's defeat in the 19 November elections, I took time off for self reflection and have come up with a few resolutions. I hope to receive suggestions and support from my well wishers.

- Our revolution was aimed at creating a better society, culture, and power structure. But in the present political scenario we couldn't distinguish ourselves from other leaders. So Nepalis didn't want to gamble with our new political agenda and chose the old parties instead.
- People had great expectations from me because I had been continuously raising several pressing issues. But in the absence of institutional capacity, I couldn't implement my plans. For instance, on the night of 27 May 2012, I wanted to extend the tenure of the Constituent Assembly by announcing an emergency. But opposition leaders and colleagues from my own party pressured me to step away from the decision and I had to oblige. This proved to be the biggest mistake of my life.
- I will now remain committed on three issues: 1. National independence and inclusive nationalism 2. Inclusive democracy 3. Inclusive development
- To achieve this I will collaborate with leaders from other parties and organisations who share similar perspective on these issues.



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Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 14 December

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ We can discuss the UCPN(M)'s demands inside the parliament, but a high-level investigation committee is out of the question. ”

UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, *Naya Patrika*, 19 December

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MEND YOUR WAYS

Editorial, *Kantipur*, 18 December

कान्तिपुर

When bombs went off before and during November's elections, the CPN-M claimed innocence. However, a month later, party Chairman Mohan Baidya brazenly admitted that his cadres were involved in these acts of violence.

But what had eight-year-old Samir Khadgi done to the CPN-M to have his arm blown off at Bhotebahal on election day? A party that claims to represent the people and continuously accuses others of selling out, deserves a total boycott for the suffering it unleashed on innocent civilians.

Looking at the past behaviour of the breakaway Maoists, it seems like they are still stuck in the insurgency era. And instead of contributing to the peace process and providing relief to those who suffered from the excesses of the decade long war, Baidya and Co are bent on pushing the country to the brink of anarchy again. The decisions made at recent party meetings are proof of this. The CPN-M says it wants to build a people's army and cancel the 12-point agreement, moves which are completely against the flow of current politics.

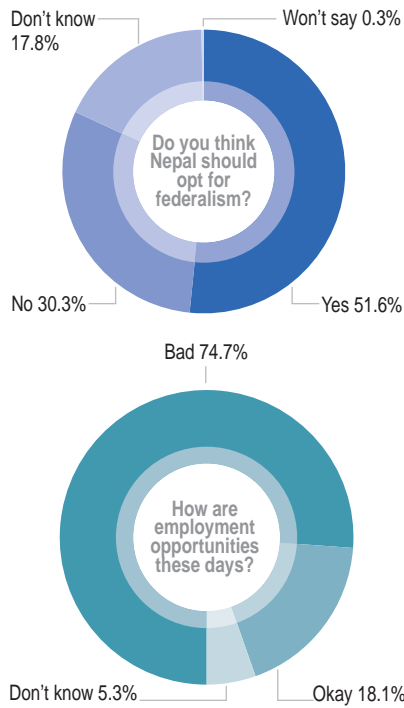


Nepal neither needs an armed revolution nor is there any legitimate ground for politics of violence. The 12-point agreement signed in 2005 helped put an end to the conflict, bid farewell to the monarchy, established the first constituent assembly, and integrated the two warring armies. Although a lot has changed in these eight years, the country is still far from meeting the goals that were laid out in that document. Based on the pact, the second constituent assembly will write a new constitution and it is therefore imperative to safeguard the spirit of the accord.

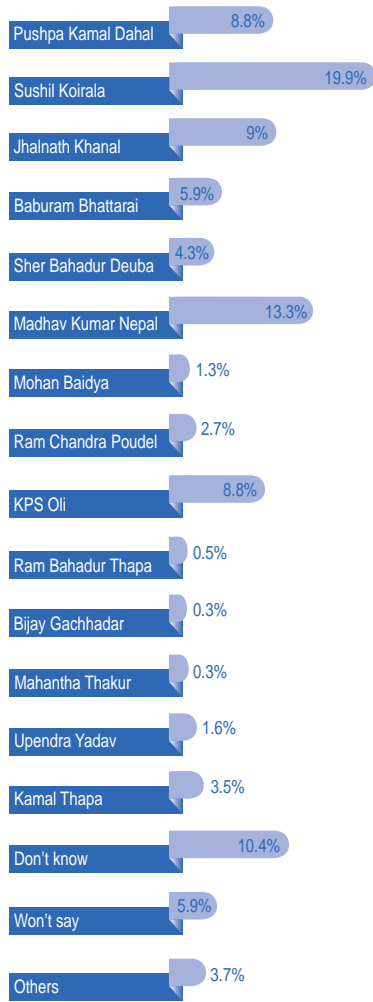
At a time when we are looking to establish a federal republic democratic Nepal, there is no place for politics of violence or exclusion. It is essential that we end the transition by bringing the CPN-M back into mainstream politics. Other parties too must do everything in their power and honestly approach the dash Maoists and accommodate their grievances. However, if Baidya and his men still decide to go against the spirit of change and return to violence and anarchy, history will prove them losers. They will be wiped out as a political force and will be remembered as thugs.

Popularity check

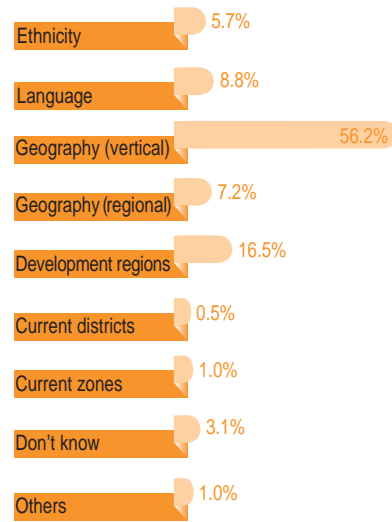
In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, *Himal Khabarpatrika* asks 376 respondents in 11 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on politics, governance, economy, and state structuring.



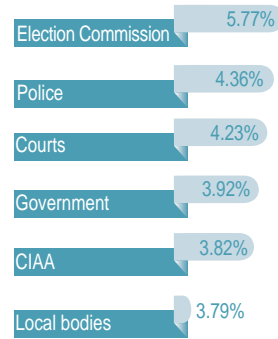
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What should be the basis for federalism?



On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate the following institutions?



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Housewives in the House

The story that dominated all others, overshadowing even the power-sharing negotiations for the next coalition, was The Kiss. Now that it looks like she ain't getting into the PR list of the Maobuddy Party that she joined out of revolutionary zeal, Kollywood's Rekha Thapa has been turning her attention to the welfare of the downtrodden by donating rice by the sack loads to the Raute community in the jungles of western Makwanpur. There was slight problem, though. Rautes, being slash-and-burn farmers, don't need rice, they want pigs. The Raute chieftain pretended to be happy enough to get the rice. However, to show just how much she loved the Raute, Rekha got carried away and planted a kiss on the startled cheek of said chieftain. Problem was, the Raute rank and file took umbrage, saying smooching was out of bounds in their hunter-gatherer culture and took it as an insult, boycotting the rice. Rekha has had quite a lot of explaining to do back at party HQ in Kathmandu, too.



By the way, since when have blue plated vehicles with diplomatic impunity been allowed to install sirens so they can tear through traffic at the Bagmuddy Bridge? We can understand police, fire trucks, and ambulances being in a hurry. But what is so precious about the time Nepal's donors have on planet earth that they can't wait like everyone else stuck at the Thapathali intersection? Is there a cutoff to the annual ODA budget a donor agency has to earmark to be allowed to have a siren to establish its slot in the pecking order? Will \$50 mill do it?



The Ass has it from unusually reliable sources that the reason the finalisation of the PR list has hit a snag is because party leaders are bargaining for kickbacks. Let's say you are a businessman who wants to be included in the UML's list and you come from a marginalised family of traditional millionaires. Simply deposit a sack of cash worth, say, 20 lacs with JN's PA at Balkhu and you've hit the jackpot. The PR lists have become a huge source of revenue for the NC and UML to replenish war chests depleted by the elections as CA membership is auctioned off to the highest bidders. That is what the delay is all about.



Madhesi parties that didn't win a single FPTP seat, but have collected a few PR slots each have to field proportionate

female candidates. As reported by a weekly, all the biggies are therefore nominating the only females they can trust: wives and sisters, and in one case even a grandmother, to the Constituent Assembly. So Shri Rajinder and Shri Raj Kishore are taking along their respective wives, as is Comrade Anil who has nominated his wife, Dimple, to the CA. Sarat Dai, meanwhile, has picked his girlfriend and Com Upadro has settled for is favourite sister-in-law. Good thing these leaders have only one wife, otherwise all hell would have broken loose. In addition to all the housewives in the new House, it looks like we will also have quite a few office wives in it.



Finally, here is a simplified summary of this week's politics: Chairman Awesome has desperately tried to deflect attention away from his failure as party leader by accusing the EC of electoral fraud. But at next week's Central Committee meeting PKD is expected to come under intense pressure to give up his chairmanship. PKD knows better than anyone else that there is no afterlife in a communist party and is reluctant. BRB's Facebook self-criticism appeared to be a mea culpa, but was actually a veiled attack on Lotus Flower. As the sabres are sharpened and rattled, PKD is doing what he does best: threatening to join the Dash.

The Ass



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