

NEPALI Times

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Black days

The Maoists have upped the ante with black flag protests that disrupted convocations at both Tribhuvan University and Purbanchal University this week. In the lead-up to Dasain, was this just a last show of strength or did the black flags really mean something? For the students who had long awaited their graduation ceremonies, such scenes were unlikely to inspire confidence in their futures. Dasain may be around the corner, but Nepali politics is still on the road to nowhere. ●

Chaaaait!

Our cities are down on charm, but kites still channel our spirits.

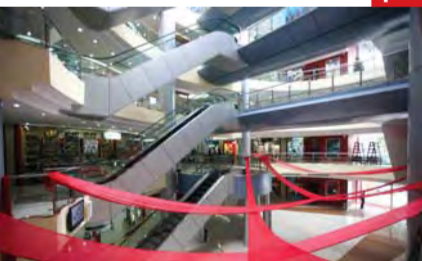


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Mall-mandu

Malls have caused a stir in Kathmandu, having redefined not only lifestyles but shopping itself.

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Constitutional May Day

We need to make sure we make it

DASAIN WISHES

The relationship between the ruling coalition and the main opposition party in the legislature continues to deteriorate. From waving black flags at ministers, Maoist cadres have resorted to pelting stones at them. This is a dangerous portent. Unfortunately, the government doesn't seem to be in a mood to cede an inch of political space to the Maoists. This makes the likelihood of a rapprochement remote.

Should the standoff in Parliament and the confrontation in the streets continue, the drafting of a new statute will be delayed, if not altogether sabotaged. The second casualty will be the functioning of the government, which has already been brought to its knees by various armed groups operating in the eastern hills and the central Tarai. The third impact will be the most cataclysmic: the ongoing peace process will unravel, with all the attendant complications and consequences.

The term 'failed state' is one of the most misunderstood and misused of our times. But the possibility appears to be staring us in the face. Girija Prasad Koirala and Madhav Kumar Nepal quibble over the arrangement of deckchairs even as the ship risks being sunk by the Maoists and its breakaway armed groups. No matter how many berths the prime minister adds to his cabinet, they will not be enough to accommodate all the minister-aspirants and keep his wobbly coalition afloat. There has to be some other way to end the stalemate.

Koirala believes the deadlock can end with the formation of a high-level coordination committee. He has to take the initiative if his prescriptions are to be taken seriously. Nepal thinks the Maoists can be brought into the present coalition government. If so, he needs to stop abusing them. Pushpa Kamal Dahal insists that his party is the only one capable of taking the peace process to its logical conclusion. Pelting stones at one's political rivals is hardly likely to contribute to this process.

Our leaders need to consider whether their actions have real value or whether they are merely reacting to events. It has been said

several times before but it bears repetition once more: there is no alternative to the politics of consensus during this, the most revolutionary period of the history of Nepal. This Dasain, let's hope the renewal of family ties will inspire in all a sense of common purpose.



KIRAN PANDAY

We need to start thinking about what happens after May 28, 2010.

The first scenario is that despite the hiccups, it all works out in the end.

This would either mean that the Maoists start cooperating with this government, the Maoists lead a national government, or all parties strike a power-sharing deal and accept a



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

consensus candidate. A broad package deal is then arrived at. And in the first few months of 2010, cutting short the time for public consultations, ignoring opposition from some quarters, a statute is pushed through.

For this to happen, there needs to be a dire sense of urgency across the political spectrum. Common fears—of losing their relevance, of the process collapsing, of inviting unmanageable risks—would have to drive parties to work together.

Most would consider this outlook unlikely. What could

change for the parties to suddenly end up cooperating in a month or two? Will the increasingly violent Maoist agitation drive home the point about their indispensability and force a deal, or will it invite a backlash? Can GPK act ahead of his party and strike a deal with the Maoists? Do key actors within the Maoists and the NC even want a change in government before their respective conventions in January and March?

And if we have to wait that long for a political agreement, won't we miss the May deadline anyway? How does the desire of the NC-UML to do away with the PLA before the constitution is written square with the seeming determination of the Maoists to keep the PLA till the constitution is written? Can contentious claims on federalism be reconciled in such a short time-frame?

This brings us to the second, more likely scenario: the May deadline will be missed.

If the big parties strike a power-sharing deal, and if the deadline is missed only because of constitutional issues, they may all get together, amend the constitution, give themselves an extension, and fulfill their mandates. But if confrontation has deepened and constitutional debates have further polarised politics, then we are stuck.

Article 64 (on the term of the CA) of the interim constitution is typical of ambiguous Nepali legalese. It seems to suggest that the CA can extend its tenure by six months in case the constitution has not been written because of the declaration of a state of emergency. Does this mean an extension can be

justified only in the event of a formal emergency? What if the extension is necessary because of other factors?

Article 143 (emergency powers) states that the president, on the recommendation of the council of ministers, can impose a state of emergency. But this has to be approved by two thirds of the legislature-parliament within a month of its imposition. This means there has to be broad, sustained political consensus on the legitimacy of such a move, even if it does not exist when the declaration is made.

Either way, we are getting into very tricky politico-legal territory. The role of the president will be important. Many forces would like to lure the President into an extra-constitutional step. The yearning for political order might then only provide further impetus to a drastic move.

That is why there is a need for a constitutional amendment now. This will give the Maoists a face-saver, allow discussion of President Yadav's move, and break the House stalemate. More importantly, an amendment that defines and limits the presidential role will be critical for the rest of this transitional period (especially if we extend the CA's tenure).

To make it more even-handed, and take into account criticisms of how Prachanda handled the Katalaw affair, the amendment could state that only governments commanding a majority can make binding recommendations on the head of state. It could also clarify the president's options if he is unsure of the government's support.

All these issues will be clarified in the future constitution. But we need to take care of the short term, too, or next May could be more dangerous than the last. ●

LETTERS

ACCOUNTABILITY

Moved by a sense of patriotism, I really agree with your editorial ('Turning the Key', #468). I just don't understand what our leaders are trying to do. House disruptions, marathon races for power, etc. What's up? Power matters less than accountability. At this crucial juncture, political biggies should not run after what their henchmen and cadres say, but what the populace really demands.

Bed Nath Sharma, Kaski

CONSENSUS

The time has come for leaders like GP Koirala, Madhav Nepal, and Prachanda to put aside their personal ambitions and work for the country's welfare ('Nepal and Koirala', #468). Madhav Nepal might not be an outstanding leader of men but is less controversial than our other leaders, so our other parties should work together with them. There is no useful purpose served by changing horses midstream just to satisfy egos.

D.B.N. Murthy, Lalitpur

INSPIRING

The touching piece on Jhamak Ghimire ('Renegade child of the hills', #468) brought to light one of our national heroines. She has long been known to the Nepali literature scene and has in fact received awards for her work. Finally, the government is taking the initiative to recognise Jhamak. Now, if only the hundreds of thousands of disabled people across Nepal were given as much respect and support!

Anup Bhandari, Kathmandu

MASTERCLASS

The review on Kubrick's masterpiece ('Back to the future', #467) brought back so

many of my favourite cinematic moments.

Kubrick virtually invented a new movie language here – silence. I've yet to see a movie that uses silence as part of the narrative better and with special effects that seem as fresh as when it was first made. Space has never looked more grand, beautiful and mysterious as in 2001. Compared to it, the Star Wars series simply seems childish and dated (not that they were great movies anyway).

Badri Rai, email

foreigners or forces beyond their control. But it's about time we blamed ourselves, as citizens of Nepal, and not any ethnic group. You can be individualistic in a big country with lots of resources, but not in a country as small and poor as Nepal. We must work together, not against one another. Federalism won't work until people learn this lesson.

Ritu Raj Onta, email

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms are accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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BLAME GAME

I totally agree with Ratna Sansar Shrestha ('Jumping the gun', #467). Nepalis blame too many of their own problems on

United Marketers Limited

Rumours of the death of the united UML are greatly exaggerated

Unlike the Maoist leaders in their rumpled clothes, UML stalwarts dress well and are generally presentable. That could be one of the reasons television reporters prefer them to the stuffy politicians of the NC.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

UML politicians are also very media-savvy. They usually have a sound bite for every occasion. No wonder the media is so keen to cover marginal players in Nepal's power politics such as Bamdev Gautam and Ishwar Pokharel. The UML's media profile is far in excess of its political weight.

Ranking leaders of the UML are extremely articulate in outlining the deficiencies of bourgeois parties like the NC. They combine combativeness and witticism in criticising what they call the leftwing extremism of the Maoists. The UML seldom censures rightwing politicians. But it's in attacking each other that the rhetoricians of Balkhu Palace excel.

It's enough to hear Jhahnath Khanal on Madhav Nepal or vice versa to keep abreast of the latest innovations in verbal abuse. But



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

even by the high standards of the vitriolic exchanges among UML leaders, Comrade Khadga Prasad Oli is a class unto himself. His acid observations on party colleagues advocating a policy of accommodation towards Maoists, the new 'class enemies' of the UML, are unforgettable.

Oli has headed to Japan for Dasain. The public space will be a little less stormy in the weeks to come. But acrimonious exchanges between the Nepal and Khanal cliques are likely to continue. However, it's unlikely the UML will implode anytime soon. The ferocity of verbal duels between faction leaders

notwithstanding, rumours of the death of the united UML are greatly exaggerated.

The UML emerged out of a coalition of leftwing groups formed at the insistence of NC leader Ganeshman Singh during the People's Movement of 1990. Madan Bhandari then transformed it into a formidable electoral force through a clever mix of dogmatism and demagoguery. But the party began to change soon after his death in a car accident in 1993.

In the post-Soviet euphoria of the early 1990s, the rise of the UML's hammer and sickle flag in the Himalaya was as disturbing

to the outside world then as the Maoists' electoral performance in 2008 was. Donors made a beeline for the newly constructed Balkhu headquarters when the UML minority government took charge. Everybody wanted to assist in the bourgeoisification of the UML.

The first flush of foreign money went to party fronts functioning as NGOs in the fields of human, child and gender rights. More funds began to flow for development work to UML affiliates once donors realised they were the only ones allowed to operate in areas afflicted by the Maoist insurgency.

By early 2001, the UML had

become so thoroughly de-politicised that it didn't allow a single sitting of the winter session of parliament to function. When the media accused the then opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal of obstructing the democratic process, he responded: "We had never said that we would not allow taking up of regular business. If the PM had resigned, the House could have functioned normally." In the face of the Maoist boycott of the legislature and the executive, Prime Minister Nepal would do well to remember his words.

These days, the UML runs more like a public limited company than a political party. Every director knows the limits of his freedom of acrimony. If they cross the line, they are likely to be thrown out by their shareholders, which in the case of the UML consists of NGO-entrepreneurs, small shopkeepers, government officials and political fixers in cities and small towns all over the country. There is too much at stake for the petty bourgeoisie, for they well know that the moment the UML disintegrates, they will be the first to be devoured by the Maoists. ●

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PICS: ANUP PRAKASH

Mall-mandu

SUBEKSHA POUDEL

Malls have caused a stir in Kathmandu, having redefined not only lifestyles but shopping itself. Unlike locally owned mom-and-pop stores, which cultivate relationships with individual shoppers, malls rely on mass appeal and commerce.

Shopping malls first emerged in the early 1920s in the United States, where they replaced department stores, but didn't grow into today's gigantic mega-malls until the 1980s.

They filtered into Asia following the meteoric growth of the East Asian economies in the 1990s, and gave rise to a generation of hip youngsters who indulged in a new 'mall culture'. They didn't so much shop in malls as 'hang out', which meant chatting, watching movies, browsing shops, bowling and gaming—the whole nine yards of modern-day entertainment for kids.

Kathmandu malls are far smaller than their international counterparts but like them have sparked a new lifestyle.

"I hang out in malls during weekends with my friends and we usually eat, bowl and watch movies," says student Sarif Maharjan.

Nepal's largest mall, City Centre (top), is a milestone in Nepal's burgeoning mall culture. It has a food court and a 4D theatre where the seats rumble and shake in response to the events unfolding on the screen, adding another 'dimension' of sensation. And of course, it has dozens of chic, modern brand name stores.

Mamnsi Agrawal of City Centre says, "Attracting customers means not just



Malls are flourishing in Kathmandu but still have lots to learn

having good shops but entertaining them as well. People should be happy when they leave the complex."

Recently opened Sherpa Mall has now become the hip spot for youngsters. "I just love the ambience," says Samana Shrestha, 18, enjoying an ice-cream. "It's a great hangout." Located in Darbar Marg, Sherpa Mall is especially popular with the young adult crowd as it offers a good mixture of dining and shopping.

But there is a darker side to the mall boom. Kathmandu's old network of stores, some of which have been around for many generations, are feeling the

heat as they lose business to newer, glitzier competition.

Sambrina Napit, who owns a store opposite City Centre, says she's lost 50% of her business since the mall began operations and is now considering closing down. "We just can't compete. They can offer huge discount schemes because they buy things in bulk, which we can't do," she complains. A neighbouring store has it worse, having lost all of its business to City Centre's supermarket Big Mart.

But these stores will find reprieve among shoppers who dislike malls for reasons of service and culture. If you want a traditional cushion cover, for example, a

mall's probably the last place you would visit. Local stores also cultivate close relationships with individual shoppers, so their service is invariably better than what malls can offer.

One shopper says, "I can go to this clothes store that my family has used for generations, and the shopkeepers will know exactly what I want because he's known my family for so long."

So far, the service in malls has caused some resentment among shoppers, and not only because they're unaware of each shopper's individual needs. The service is just bad, period.

Architects Prajita Joshi and Shobhana Rajbhandari complain, "We can't even tell the salespeople apart from the shoppers."

Another common complaint is that salespeople seem indifferent to their customers, showing them what they ask for, but rarely encouraging them to explore other styles and colours and so forth. Compare this to the scene in traditional sari stores, where salespeople will throw down dozens of rolls of saris to entice hesitant customers. This kind of enthusiasm is rare in malls.

Along with the high prices, this is partly why malls haven't fared as well as their proprietors hoped, although business certainly isn't slumping. Prices are high because malls have to cover for lighting, parking spaces and air conditioning. There's also ample competition, with at least half a dozen malls already in the city. As a result, few stores enjoy a regular stream of customers.

"I have some doubt about sales, but it's a start," one proprietor insists.

It's make or break for many this Dasain—the gloves are off and the sales are on. ●

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Looking ahead

The Beed was told yesterday that predicting stock prices is about looking forward and not to past trends. One wonders whether this is a lesson we can apply



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

more generally in Nepal: look forward, not backward. Reading some of the news pieces from last week confirmed my hunch.

Civil servants had a day off to celebrate Civil Servants Day, adding to an already long list of holidays. How can they bear to look at themselves in the mirror? They probably don't, which is why they're more self-congratulatory than critical. My favourite Fire and Ice Pizzeria announced its closure due to union issues. If we cannot retain existing foreign investors forget about luring new ones! Here is a great eatery that had the potential of being franchised in South Asia and Southeast Asia, and it has had to close because of a few haggling staff members. The Central Bank is considering capping bank CEO packages. How regressive! If banks perform, it's because the management and shareholders are paid well. A better way to cut costs would be

to have more efficient and transparent performance-based bonuses and removing the offices of all non-executive chairpersons and directors from banks. The Securities Board is taken to ransom by some promoters who want to sell their shares and a group of self-proclaimed selfless investment protection groups that do not want the Securities Board to follow the law. A bunch of former diplomats get together to discuss economic diplomacy and as elsewhere in the nation, time does not matter. Waiting for the

something we know we can't change overnight. Why can't businesses discuss e-commerce with India alongside regular trade? Armed with a credit card valid in India and Nepal, one can transact on Indian portals. Can we regulate this? If there are Indian calling cards that can be used from Nepal, how does that impact Nepal's revenues? Can we think beyond getting Vanaspati ghee through? Should not bank directors and shareholders be reviewing customer feedback reports and fixing their non-functional helplines?

We need to pull ourselves out of the past and look ahead

minister, the program starts an hour late and attendees who have been invited do not know whether they are to speak or not.

The list is endless. What should we take away from these stories? Our government and bureaucrats may be terrible, but that shouldn't keep private organisations and citizens from doing their part. Look forward, not backward. Americans waited eight years for Bush to go, but such leaders didn't serve as clogs in the wheels of the economy. It's only in Nepal that we cover up our own inefficiencies by blaming

While we should do our best regardless of the bureaucracy, the bottom line is that it needs to go. Now that we can buy sim cards over the counter, we don't need bureaucratic permission to make phone calls. ATM cards have eliminated the need to pay to take money out of one's own bank account. If we could register our companies online, it would save us the whiskey money we're made to pay at registration offices.

In short, leveraging technology and thinking about the future can only take us ahead. Isn't that where we want to be? ●
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Oodles



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Banking up

Everest Bank announced net profits have increased by 37 per cent compared to last year. The bank will be providing bonus shares of 30 per cent and cash dividends of 30 per cent. Everest Bank also inaugurated its 35th branch in Thamel last week.

Festive savings

Keeping in mind the festive season, Global Bank has launched 'Pariwar Bachat Yojana'. The scheme will provide customers up to 10 per cent interest on fixed deposits.



Gems

Bajaj launched 'Sun Chandi Hira Moti' for Dasain and Tihar. Anyone purchasing a Bajaj motorcycle is eligible to win gold, silver, pearls or diamonds.

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Dasain's devils

Shiva Sharma in *Saptahik*, 11 September

सप्तहिक

Simply put, being alert is the only way to steer clear of escalating crime in the valley. In the rush before Dasain, Kathmandu is becoming as infamous for robbery as Patna, Siligudi and other crime-prone Indian cities.

Police reports show crime is taking place regularly in isolated alleys, peaking during load-shedding hours, with cases of severe injuries when victims try to fight off robbers. A woman was mugged in stark daylight in Maitidebi and was beaten up the following day by the same group because her jewellery was gold-plated. Says Rabina Rai, another victim in Thamel, "When a gang of thieves surround you, there's no option but to give up."

Investigations point to an expanding



KIRAN PANDAY

network of organised crime as groups of young robbers team up all over the valley. One reason could be the extremely low number of security personnel on the beat. One policeman has to attend to the needs of over 1000 citizens in the capital, even though the international average is 300. It

doesn't help that many criminals manage to get released early.

The muggers have become sophisticated, and use code language to communicate. Travelling on public transport, for instance, they zero in on rich victims. If the target isn't an easy one, they

don't hesitate to use weapons.

Burglars are also steadily increasing in number. Surprisingly, reports indicate that intruders are more active by day than by night, with 15 out of 24 burglaries reported last month happening around noon.

Such criminals, according to Damodar Dawadi at Hanuman Dhoka Police Station, are usually not poor. They're often youths from rich families who are unable to meet the high costs of purchasing drugs and paying for their extravagant lives.

However, the police are not solely accountable for ever-increasing crime. An equal portion of blame goes to these youths' guardians and the government. If parents were responsible for their children or if the government provided enough jobs, crime would not be seen as an option.

With Dasain approaching, crime rates are expected to soar as people are more likely to be travelling with cash and jewellery. Those without may then decide to take the opportunity to share the wealth.



E-bike

Lal Prasad Sharma in *Kantipur*, 15 September

कान्तिपुर

Electric bikes are selling like hot cakes in Pokhara. It's thanks to its uncountable conveniences: for the lighter versions, you don't need a licence, a number plate, a bill

book, or a helmet. The cherry on top is these bikes are economical, easy to ride and environmentally friendly.

Says Indian Army retiree Shiva Dhakal, "The light weight of the bike makes it extremely easy to ride." And who wouldn't want one at a time of never-ending strikes, ever-increasing petrol shortages and sky-scraping expenses (with a litre of petrol costing Rs 77)? This electric bike goes for upto 100 km for a mere five rupees.

Unlike normal bikes, rechargeable bikes have headlights, sidelights, button gears, hand brakes, a remote lock system and theft alarms. Nevertheless, load-shedding has stymied the growth of the market for electric bikes.

Political language

Editorial in *Rajdhani*, 14 September

राजधानी

It is said people get the leaders they deserve. This is true in a democratic country because people elect their leaders.

But in a country where people are tolerant and civilised, how is it that their leaders act against all civilised norms and yet are condoned for it? If we consider the speeches of our politicians over the past few days, it is a national shame that we accept them as leaders.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal did a commendable job condemning a recent speech by Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. But Dahal's use of offensive language in public speech is not an exception. Nepal called Dahal 'uncivilised' and a 'blood sucker'. Dahal and



KIRAN PANDAY

other Maoist leaders call their opponents 'murderers' and 'criminals'. When will this end?

Language loses control when guns and intolerance enter politics. There is no place for human values and humanity in such situations.

Politicians lose public respect but become symbols of a filthy mind and expression. Nepal may have reached this stage. The media finds it embarrassing to translate the uncouth expressions of our leaders into English, and thereby to the world. Language is the expression of one's thinking, ideology and human

sensitivity. When leaders indulge in such uncivilised speech, they also reveal their base natures to the world. What kind of characters should represent Nepal in international and domestic forums? Should these kinds of activities be condoned?

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अब सधैका साथी



KIRAN PANDAY

Six conditions

A constituent assembly was announced in 1951 but it never materialised due to a tug-of-war between the political parties for power. The Maoists' 10-year insurgency and 18-day Jana Andolan II made it possible after six decades.

We have only nine months to write the constitution. Doubts are creeping into people's minds as



COMMENT
Barshaman Pun

to whether it will be written on time. The government that was formed after the President's unconstitutional move has not exhibited honesty in the constitution-writing and peace process. In other words, the present government is the main obstacle to writing the new constitution.

The CA committees have been working on drafting the new constitution. The CA has already started discussing the drafts submitted to it. A 15-member committee headed by Laxman Lal Karna has been formed to incorporate issues raised in the CA and prepare a preliminary draft paper for the constitutional committee. Six of the 11 thematic committees have already submitted their preliminary drafts and concept papers to the CA.

The constitutional committee compiles all drafts, incorporating suggestions from the CA sessions, and prepares a draft for the new constitution. This draft will be taken back to the people for their opinions. Then discussion on each article begins in the CA before the constitution is finalised.

There is no consensus on

major issues among the major political parties in the CA. There seems to be agreement in principle on issues such as democracy, federalism, periodic elections, forms of political system, civilian liberty, freedom of speech, human rights, adult franchise, autonomy, inclusion, socio-economic transformation and social justice but there are differences among the parties. Some parties think the parliamentary system is democracy but we have put forward the presidential, president-prime ministerial and consensus and inclusive models for discussion.

The current government is the main obstacle to writing the constitution on time

The principles and models will be developed to meet the needs of the country. Federalism is now accepted by all but whether it should be implemented on the basis of language, ethnicity or geography is still unsettled. Similarly, we need to have more rounds of discussions on what kind of election system we should adopt, how we can ensure the representation of women, Dalits, Janajatis, minorities, marginalised communities and the people of Karnali. This is important because in the previous electoral system, only people from the ruling class and people with money and muscle won the elections. The

first-past-the-post system does not ensure representation of the diversity of Nepal.

The bones of contention are whether the federal republic should be the rule of elites or the masses, whether to strengthen institutions representing the people or unelected institutions operating from behind the curtains, how to ensure civil and individual liberty, how to recognise the identity and ensure the rights of oppressed communities, regions and genders. Should we adopt the principle of socio-economic transformation or allow the big fish to eat the small fish? These issues should be discussed to reach a consensus.

These issues can be resolved if the following six conditions are met. First, the political parties should forge a consensus on the peace process, the basic principle of state restructuring and the model of army integration. Second, there should be agreement on the universal principle of the constitution to proceed with the discussion on thematic drafts of the constitution in the CA. Third, the current government does not have the legitimacy to carry on the peace process and constitution writing. Therefore, a new government should be formed under the Maoists' leadership. Fourth, we need to build trust among the major political forces without the help of foreign forces. Fifth, we need to guarantee peace and relief for socio-political transformation and sixth, there has to be dialogue with armed and unarmed insurgent groups.

The constitution will be written on time only if these conditions are met. If not, conflict is inevitable. ●

Consensus is the key

Dharma Sheela Chapagain, Maoist CA member, Jhapa-4

How satisfied are you with the CA business?

The constitutional committee remained idle in the absence of the committee chair for the past three months. This affected the business of sub-committees under it. Since the election of the committee chair things have been gradually gaining momentum.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Will the constitution be written on time?

The CA regulations allotted two years to write the constitution. But the CA calendar has been rescheduled time and again. This has shortened the time available to discuss the draft papers in the CA sessions. The political parties should put their differences aside and come together to expedite writing of the constitution. But the persistence of conflict among them is not favourable to completing the constitution on time.

Don't you think the provisions to appoint the Chief Justice from outside the pool of Supreme Court justices will hurt the judiciary?

This is one of the alternatives for appointing the Chief Justice. It is intended to rationalise the judiciary, not influence or weaken it. The Chief Justices appointed from within the existing pool of justices have not performed well in the past. So we suggest using an elected institution to appoint them.

What should be the official state language?

Nepali should be the language of communication. Hindi is the language of communication in the Madhes but it is also an issue related to national sovereignty. Hindi is linked with imperialism and can never be the official state language.

The CA seems to be divided between democrats and republicans.

This is a conflict between old and new mindsets. This clash is also seen in the CA committees. Feudals and elites have already disfigured democracy and they want to do the same in the CA. We would have accepted it if it was pro-public democracy.

Totalitarians and democrats

Nabindra Raj Joshi, NC CA member, Kathmandu-8

How have you spent your time in the CA?

We are members of the CA and the Parliament at the same time, so we have dual responsibilities. But the Maoists have been obstructing parliamentary proceedings. This has affected constitution-writing and disrupted the peace process. We hold committee meetings but other things do not look encouraging.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Will the constitution be written?

We are trying our best. We have to give something to the people within the stipulated time. Constitution writing is also part of the peace process.

Where is the debate on a people's parliament and the house of representatives heading?

We are committed to democratic norms and values. No one should have hidden agendas. The main conflict is between totalitarian and democratic forces.

What do you think of the Maoists' proposal for state restructuring?

Their concept is not viable geographically, economically or socially.

Are any efforts being made to win over those who think autonomy will lead to the disintegration of the country?

There should be consensus on the basic principles of constitution writing to move ahead in this process. Federalism does not work with the politics of revenge and slaughter. We can take our opponents into confidence if there is unity among the pro-republicans.

What needs to be done to write the constitution on time?

Consensus and cooperation among political parties, unhindered parliamentary proceedings and helping state mechanisms to function smoothly.



KIRAN PANDAY



KIRAN PANDAY

UP, UP and AWAY

The monsoon will subside, the sky will again turn deep blue, the wind will change direction and the paddy fields will ripen to gold. It's Dasain. Time to shop, party, eat, drink and most importantly, fly kites.

Kids will climb to their rooftops and terraces and the collective victory cry of 'Chaaaaaait!' will ring in the ears of city folks.

The earliest written account of kite flying comes from about 200 BC when the Chinese general Han Hsien flew a kite over the walls of a city he was attacking to measure how far his army would have to tunnel in to reach the defences. This ingenious method of surveying worked. His troops tunneled into the inner city, surprised the enemy and were victorious.

It is believed that kite flying was eventually spread by traders from China to Korea and across Asia to India. Each region developed a distinctive style of kite, flying techniques and the cultural context in which to fly them. So we don't actually know if kite flying came to Nepal from the north or the south.

Choosing a kite is an art in itself.

Nepali kites have no tail and two sticks of equal length are crossed and tied in the centre. A string pulled tight across the back of a cross-stick bows the surface, making the kite self-balancing. A specialty of traditional Nepali kites is the hand-made *lokta* paper out of which they are made.

These days *lokta* kites are becoming something of a rarity, and you're as likely to come across a plastic kite with random brand names patterned across it. But many kite enthusiasts prefer the lighter and more manoeuvrable 'Lucknow' variety, which is flattened with a conch shell

and sports distinctive stripes. Lucknows are the Spitfires of kites, with classic dog-fighting qualities: capable of sharp turns and diving attacks, they emit a hissing sound in a dive and have good line response.

The cost of a kite in Kathmandu ranges from Rs 5-50 and lines cost Rs 200-1000. The most popular kite shops are in Asan and Kalimati. It's not too late for a spin in the sky!

Our cities are down on charm, but kites still channel our spirits



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Authenticity rules

For the first time, I've joined my father in the ceremonial run-up to Dasain, the festival commemorating the Goddess Durga's defeat of the demon Mahisa. Good over evil and all that jazz, you know. We toast the gods and our extended families, don new clothes, drink and drive, eat and gamble to excess.

Next to my saronged father with our holy threads on parade, we follow in a corner of the attic the lead of the guru as he directs us to offer flowers, rice, this and that to the Bhagawati, a fist-sized brass idol on a lion all but obscured now with garlands, grain and grass. There are coconuts wrapped in red cloth, an oil lamp burning through a leaf plate, and a whole assortment of offerings.



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

There's also an earthenware jar filled with water and coated with dung wherein barley seeds have been planted. The seeds, sprouting vigorously from

day three on, will make good jamara to go with the traditional Dasain blessings.

Guru trickles water into our palms, then leads us through soothing, singsong Sanskrit incantations. He lights an oil lamp and hands it to my father, who rotates it slowly. The priest chants, ringing a small brass bell, and I make the best of a damaru. The light from the lamp throws shadows across the room and bathes our faces, warm and calm.

Guru dabs achyataa – rice grains mixed with vermilion and yoghurt – onto our foreheads, spoons out a dubious milky concoction and dried fruit into our waiting palms, and we climb back down to our daily strife. My father demands of me, mock-serious: "So, how does it feel to be a true Hindu?"

What does it mean that I have willingly joined to these rituals when I do not believe they are any more than just that? I have no antagonism towards these gestures, these gods – in fact my renewed, outsider's gaze grants me the curiosity and patience for them. Will I then carry on, and even pass on these rituals, albeit mediated by society and the priesthood, to my children as mere shells of what they are meant to be? Would it not be dishonest for me to tell them well, literally speaking, I don't believe in any of this, but culturally speaking, I think it's all very well?

But the bottom line is in the appreciation



NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI

I visited Kirtipur on Saturday. We zoomed up through the lush grounds of Tribhuvan University, faced the many-windowed concrete skyline for an instant, then headed past Bag Bhairab to the community bhatti of Newa Lahana. The first time around I'd admired the carefully choreographed authenticity of this sprawling purveyor of Newari specialties. This time we were bowled over by the second anniversary celebrations that clogged the streets – the sheer numbers of enthusiastic locals, the intense interplay of percussion and flute mere slips of boys treated us to, and not least the monsoonal cascades of chyang.

The boy band was followed by an Egyptian oud player, who was then joined by an ensemble of tabla and sarangi and guitar. Then came the lakhe, the dancing red demon shaking his black hair in courtly fury. A local attempted to join in and was ushered away. A friend complained: "It's great, but if this whole thing were for real then the lakhe would be game, he wouldn't have to be protected by impeccably costumed organisers."

It made me wonder. Wonderful, but how authentic was this enthusiastic procession of Newari culture, and how authentic is my enthusiasm for the rituals of Dasain? The bottom line, perhaps, lies in the appreciation. If we can maintain our respect for the origins and the continuity of our cultures, then a little admixture here and there probably isn't worth getting the janai in a twist over. As for lakhe protocol, the last word goes to my friend Bhaikaji Maharjan: "Noone would dare to approach an Indra Jatra lakhe, the lakhe would get hold of him. But 'show' lakhes, well, anyone can go and dance with them." ●

Leading



DEWAN RAI

Shanti Devi Chamar

"The judiciary should not be under the control of parliament as this is against the universal principle of the independent judiciary," declared UML CA nominee Shanti Devi Chamar, criticising the preliminary draft reports and concept papers on the judiciary system being discussed in the CA session on Thursday.

She is not hesitant to speak out in the parliamentary sessions, and diligently does her homework before going to the CA. She does not feel the need to consult her party or experts, explaining, "The party whip is applicable only in Parliament, not in the CA."

A resident of Sauraha, Kapilvastu, Chamar is currently district member and the area in-charge of the All Nepal Women Association of UML. She believes that she was nominated by her party because she fought for Dalit women.

Numbers matter when it comes to pushing Dalit concerns. There are four CA members from the Chamar community, which has a population of 269,000 according to the 2001 census. But they represent different parties. "And that makes us helpless," Shanti Devi says.

Chamar is in the Committee for Determining the Form of Governance System of the CA and the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament. As a member of the latter committee, she gets to review cases of corruption and irregularities. "You simply lose hope sometimes when you see the scale of irregularities," she admits. But her new-found confidence is irrepressible. "Ministers and members of parliament were special to me but not any more," she says. "I am now one of them." ●

Krishna Kumari Pariyar

Nepali Congress nominee Krishna Kumari Pariyar has a single agenda in the Constituent Assembly (CA): an inclusive constitution.

"No one should be left out," says Pariyar, perhaps remembering her previous incarnation as a tailor in Shantipatan, Pokhara. A mother of four children, Pariyar was interested in politics since childhood. As a Dalit woman, however, a career as a legislator seemed like a distant dream.

When she was first nominated to the assembly, people treated her appointment with scepticism. The doubters were left speechless when she launched development

projects in her district with the Rs 1 million budget allotted to CA members. She says the money was spent on projects according to public demand.

"I wanted to make sure people from all sections of society would benefit from the fund," she recalls. Now, Pariyar is busy advocating for women's rights in Parliament. She is hopeful her concerns will be addressed in the constitution, but has doubts about the implementation of the laws that will follow.

"If the previous provisions were implemented, women would have a different status already," she says. "Making laws is one thing, but its implementation is

the crucial thing."

Pariyar is an active member of the CA, where she sits on the Committee for Rights of Minorities and Marginalised Communities, and she is also a member of the Legislative Committee of Parliament.

In spite of the ongoing tug-of-war, she is hopeful the constitution will be written within the stipulated time. "People elected us to write the new constitution. If we do not accomplish our task, we won't be able to face them again," she says.

Pariyar has no intention of returning to her old profession. "This is where every change is possible," she says of politics. ●

by example



DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES: Women CA members participate in an interaction program organised by the CA Women's Caucus with support from UNDP and International IDEA on 3 September.

DEWAN RAI

Women lawmakers prove their sceptics wrong

Women CA members are not who they were 16 months ago. With the help of workshops funded and organised by the UNDP's Centre for Constitutional Dialogue and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), a thriving women's caucus has taken up women's issues with flair and passion.

"We are close to success in ensuring our rights in the new

constitution," says Dawa Sharma, coordinator of the Women's Caucus in the CA and Maoist CA member. The caucus has already prepared a charter of women's rights and provisions and submitted it to the CA chair for inclusion in the constitution. It has also been collaborating with different organisations to facilitate workshops and meetings on women's issues as well as electoral systems and fundamental rights.

The Women's Caucus spans the entire political spectrum but its members are conscious that ideological biases should take a back seat. "There is a profound understanding among us," says Mohammadi Siddiqui, co-coordinator of the caucus and NCCA member. "The CA members need not abide by the party whip."

ground. Others suggested many women CA members lacked the expertise to participate in discussions. But the caucus has already submitted its suggestions to all 11 thematic committees to be incorporated in the new constitution. "We are 197 members and we are united when it comes to our concerns. There is no way the CA can ignore our demands," Siddiqui says.

The Women's Caucus is lobbying for 50 per cent participation of women at all policymaking levels, inclusive and proportional representation in the new parliament and women's rights as fundamental rights in the new constitution.

"The new constitution should include a provision of compensation for violating fundamental rights as a deterrent to perpetrators," says Maoist CA member Sharmila Dura. She also suggests adding administrative rights to fundamental rights to ensure women's inclusion in the administrative sector. If they succeed, Nepal will join the ranks of just 15 countries that have a separate article for women in their constitutions.

Until very recently, Nepal had the dubious distinction of being among a handful of nations with lower life expectancies for women than for men. If the Women's Caucus gets its way, we may have real reason to be proud of the way we treat our women. ●

Dashain Tihar

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Homeward bound



Newly trained midwives are returning to their villages to help people

SABHYATA TIMSINA

When her father died of pneumonia, Asmaya Pariyar was shattered. But rather than stay sunk in gloom, Pariyar went to Banepa to train to become an Assistant Midwife as part of the Rotary Club of Kathmandu-Midtown's 'Health, Hunger and Humanity Grants Project'. She will return to her village next year to put into practice the lifesaving skills she has learned.

"My father died because of pure ignorance. I want to study so I can be informed and teach others," explains Pariyar.

Dozens of girls in villages across the country have followed suit. The 3-H Grants Project, which has a total endowment of over \$300,000, has brought girls from ten remote western districts to Banepa. There they are given an eighteen-month course on reproductive health. Along with birth attendance training, the girls are given orthopaedic and dental training. With the help of microcredit, they will be able to establish independent clinics in their hometowns.

The project is the brainchild of German Rotarian Hartmut Bander, who worked with Rotary Club of Kathmandu-Midtown and Darmstadt Bergtasse. He started the project after witnessing the dilapidated state of health posts in rural Nepal.

The objective is to empower villagers to help themselves so they won't have to depend on the largesse of government or NGOs. Says project contact person C.K. Golcha, "The problem with sending city dwellers to help out in villages is that they cannot adjust to the environment there. But if you train locals, their love for their birthplace will drive them to go back and do something productive."

The first batch of graduates are all set to return to their villages. Shy and self-conscious when they first arrived in Kathmandu, they're now brimming with self-confidence and eager to make a difference. Project manager Rajaram Joshi notes, "The graduates feel they don't need to stay in Kathmandu to earn money."

Rina Thakali of Jomsom confirms this, adding, "We are privileged to have been given this opportunity. And we cannot wait to give something back." The girls will continue to receive support once they're working back in their villages. Pariyar, for instance, will be sent back home with Rs 1,26,000 and all the necessary equipment to start up a mother-child health clinic. The interest on the amount will help Pariyar sustain herself and maintain the clinic.

The Rotary Club plans to train many more midwives and run similar projects in other parts of Nepal. With national maternal mortality rates still unacceptably high, a local effort such as this will have positive impacts right across the country. ●

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- Thursday - School Times - everything kids should know
- Friday - Green - environment matters
- Saturday - Property Plus - weekend two pager focusing on real estate



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Gearing up for adventure

thermals in the store that is preparing for a soft opening next week, Tashi explains that the 'Made in Nepal' tag on the items is itself part of the branding for his products. "It wouldn't be the same if it was Made in Bangladesh or Made in Cambodia," he explains. Sherpa now makes most of its products in Nepal and Tashi says this is a strong selling point at a time when consumers around the world are turning against big multinationals outsourcing to China or southeast Asia.

The elegant brick and glass five-storey flagship store houses Sherpa's research and development unit, and will have two floors of clothing and trekking hardware that will be a one-stop shop for down jackets, sleeping bags, tents and trekking gear. The

top floor will have a bed and breakfast called The Terrace.

"What we have tried to do is offer guests a family atmosphere in the middle of Kathmandu with all the modern amenities," explains Tsedo Sherpa, Tashi's daughter and vice-president of the company. "This is an American company with a Nepali soul. We want to prove to the world that Nepalis can be the best in the world."

The décor of The Terrace is modern, and the furnishings reveal Tibetan and Sherpa influences. Indeed, the functional elegance of The Terrace is so cosy that two of the eight rooms already have guests in them – even though it hasn't opened yet. ●

Kunda Dixit

www.sherpaadventuregear.com

New store and guesthouse set to open in Kathmandu

When Sherpa Adventure Gear opens its international flagship store near Darbar Marg on 1 October, it will be a dream come true for Tashi Sherpa.

Unlike other Nepalis who have emigrated to the west, Tashi travelled in the opposite direction. At a time when foreign investors are abandoning Nepal, he has decided to invest in Nepal. Tashi

has not just returned to Nepal, but is setting up the world headquarters of his Sherpa Adventure Gear company in Kathmandu.

"I am a businessman, this is not a charity," says Tashi, "I came here because there is a high return on investment and Nepal has a very strong brand."

Looking around at the Sherpa down jackets, parkas, t-shirts and

Pokka - a Japanese beverage brand synonymous with quality for over 50 years.

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **'Nepal Rendezvous - Nagarkot Workshop'**, paintings by Bangladeshi and Nepali artists at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg, till 31 Oct, 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **The Soloist**, movie at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 18 Sep, 5.30PM, 4428549
- ❖ **Raise The Red Lantern**, screening at Documentary Open School, Gaurighat, 18 Sep, 5PM, 4471104
- ❖ **Film South Asia 2009**, Festival of South Asian documentaries, 17-20 Sep, www.filmsouthasia.org
- ❖ **Patan Press Club**, meets every Thursday at Dhokaima Café, 6PM, 5522113
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Tai Chi 10-11.30AM, Yoga 8.30-9.30AM and Meditation 5-6PM weekdays, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402

MUSIC

- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30PM onwards, 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency, 12-3.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM, 4260326
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30PM onwards, 4468589



DINING

- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM,

3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818

- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for home made pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45PM
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle East at The Café, Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM, 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-La with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards, 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068
- ❖ **Stupa View Restaurant**, for vegetarian creations & clay oven Pizza at Boudha Stupa, 4480262

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dhulikhel Lodge Resort** offers an overnight stay for Rs 1600 till 30 Sep, 4222389
- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 555 plus taxes, for a night of double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa. Offer valid for Nepalis and local residents only, 4489800

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

Quest Entertainment



Director Sudarshan Thapa presents his debut feature, Mero Euta Saathi Cha. Touted as a romantic melodrama, this big budget movie is about childhood friends Jay (Aryan Sigdel) and Shikha (Namrata Shrestha) who pair up at the cornerstones of their lives. Shikha is a small town girl with small dreams and aspirations whereas Jay is the raunchy heir to a family fortune. How they meet and realise their love for each other is for you to find out.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
www.jainepal.com

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

There was a surprise change in the weather pattern early this week. Powerful Siberian high pressure has lifted moisture from both arms of the monsoon. The satellite images indicate that the rains are likely to come back again, but gradually, and will fall during the night before the end of the monsoon. By now it is confirmed that this month will receive less than its quota of rain.



RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Grilled Lemon & Herb Chicken Kebabs

(Serves 4-6)

This recipe is great for the barbeque. One can use this marinade for red meat as well as seafood.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 kg | chicken thigh meat |
| ½ cup | olive oil |
| ¼ cup | white wine |
| 1 tablespoon | chopped rosemary |
| 1 tablespoon | chopped thyme |
| 1 tablespoon | chopped parsley |
| 1 teaspoon | red chilli paste |
| 2 teaspoon | chopped garlic |
| 2 tablespoons | honey |
| juice of 4 lemons | |
| salt & pepper to taste | |
| bamboo skewers | |



cut the chicken into bite size pieces. Blend the rest of the ingredients together and marinate the chicken pieces for at least two hours before skewering them. Preferably marinate the chicken overnight in the fridge to ensure it soaks up all the flavour of the marinade. Grill the chicken on a hot grill for 2-3 minutes on each side.

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KIRAN PANDAY

MEET 'N GREET: Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, attended by Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood, arrives at a press conference in Dwarika Hotel on Tuesday during a two-day official visit to Nepal.



KIRAN PANDAY

STAGE FRIGHT: Seven prominent civil society members are introduced at Tuesday's 'Himsa Antya', a program to raise awareness about ending violence in the country.



KIRAN PANDAY

SPOTLIGHT: Noted Indian thespians Shabana Azmi and Farooque Shaikh perform 'Tumhari Amrita' at Kamalmani Theatre in Patan Dhoka on Wednesday. Proceeds from ticket sales will go to the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre in Kavre.

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KIRAN PANDAY

SUVAYU DEV PANT

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated - Gandhi

"Where are they?" wonders Pramada Shah of Animal Nepal as we wade through shrubbery in a community forest adjoining Animal Nepal's sanctuary in Chobhar. Moments later we enter a clearing where, against the backdrop of the Bagmati river, stand 10 ill but recovering donkeys.

Animal Nepal rescued these donkeys from the capital's streets, where they were abandoned by Lalitpur brick kiln owners. Last year, the animal

welfare organisation started a donkey outreach program in the kilns, where 500-800 overworked and underfed donkeys are employed. They have half the life expectancy of healthy donkeys. Most have open wounds since they don't have adequate harnessing and are invariably overloaded. Shockingly, pregnant donkeys are worked until the day of delivery and given only a few days to recuperate. Some, like Naina (above) become blind after dust particles infect their eyes.

Kiln owners have used donkeys to carry loads for the past four years. They lease them from contractors in Nepalganj, where they are returned when the brick season ends in May. There

they are either sold into equally dangerous professions like hauling loads on mountain trails, or abandoned until the next brick season starts.

In June 2009 Animal Nepal investigated the equine bazar in Nepalganj and discovered the harrowing conditions in which the donkeys live. They scavenge for food in garbage dumps, give birth at busy intersections, and are treated despicably by a community that has come to regard them as pests.

As part of their outreach program, Animal Nepal has conducted a general survey of donkeys in Lalitpur's kilns and organised regular donkey clinics and public awareness campaigns. They have also begun work on a

donkey sanctuary in Godavari, funded by the Brigitte Bardot Foundation.

Most importantly, they want to work directly with kiln owners. "The main problem is a lack of awareness. There are so many small things that can be done," says Lucia de Vries of Animal Nepal. These include strapping them with rudimentary harnesses to prevent sores and giving them enough water. Shah and De Vries hope kiln owners will agree to abide by a code of conduct.

So far the response has been positive. When alerted to the needs of their animal workers, kiln owners enthusiastically took up their cause. They agreed that healthier and sturdier donkeys generate more value.

Animal Nepal has also encouraged concerned people to adopt donkeys, which are fairly easy and inexpensive to manage (see box). So far six have been adopted.

The knottier problem lies ahead. The government has yet to pass the Animal Welfare Act to protect animal rights, existing documentation is difficult to track down, and it is unclear if the act protects 'Working Animals' like donkeys and mules.

"We are a hundred years behind the rest of the world when it comes to animal rights, but enough is enough," says a determined Shah.

What will happen to Naina and her friends in Chobhar? They will be moved to the Godavari sanctuary once that's completed, but some won't be put up for adoption because they're handicapped and have gone through too much. There, treatment will continue until they die, in Shah's words, "peacefully". In the lush sanctuary, that end will be far happier than the tortured lives they led in the brick kilns of Lalitpur. ●

Miracle foal

Wendy and Robin Marston first saw their donkey Flora in May outside a Bungamati kiln. She was badly bruised and emaciated and had crooked hips from the heavy loads she carried. The Marstons duly adopted her with the help of Animal Nepal.

A month after Flora made the Marston's garden her home, they discovered she had a lump in her stomach. They were relieved to find she was only pregnant, but the vet said the baby was awkwardly positioned in the womb and would probably kill Flora if it weren't removed immediately.

"When we pulled her out we expected the newborn to

be dead, but were surprised when she shook her head," recalls daughter Allison Marston. They named the foal Pooja Bhatt, since the vet insisted she be named after a Bollywood heroine following her miraculous survival.

Pooja and Flora get along well with the Marstons' four dogs. They eat vegetable and fruit peelings and a mix of corn and rice flour easily acquired in the city. They're taken out for daily walks, too.

The neighbours, far from being annoyed, are enthralled and the two have become minor celebrities.

"Friends are over all the time to play with them, especially the little one," says Allison.

If you're interested in adopting a donkey, go to <http://animalnepal.org/adoptadonkey.html> or call 9841-334537.

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