

NEPALI Times

#549

15 - 21 April 2011

16 pages

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NEW FEAR

NO RESPITE: Butwal bombing victim Basudev Shrestha recuperates at TU Teaching Hospital, Tuesday. The blast of 27 March killed two and injured 28.

See p3 for full story by Anurag Acharya.

BIKRAM RAI

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WORKING IN-DIGNITY



It's a depressingly familiar scene. But you'd be challenged not to shed a tear at the sight of a coffin being wheeled out of Tribhuvan International Airport and loaded onto a Tata Sumo. A woman wails as she is held back by sombre relatives, "What am I going to tell your daughters?"

Last Tuesday, the Guardian posted a video online titled 'Nepali Slaves in the Middle East'.

In it, Pete Pattison charts the plight of Nepali migrant workers, a 1000 of whom leave the country each day. It's hardly a new story, but it remains a compelling one.

There's no doubt that despite the hardship of working in climes where you "sweat from the soles of your feet", many feel it is worth the risk. Millions of Nepalis work abroad, after all, and the billions of

rupees they make are keeping the economy afloat. Is it not to be expected that some will fall into the cracks, and inevitably, make the news with their misfortune?

Yet the circumstances of those who are duped by agents and, in the case of Lila Acharya, killed for trying to escape exploitation and beatings, are heartbreaking. So too are the nullified prospects of the emaciated men who, stranded in the UAE en route to Afghanistan without work, passports or visas, cram into a filthy flat and while away their days. Even the better off are undeniably exploited thanks to the lack of protection accorded to them in countries yet to demonstrate that they believe in human dignity for all, never mind the lack of respect at home.

What is happening to Nepali migrant workers is beyond doubt criminal, morally and legally. The government should be paying much more attention to the exodus via the passport office than to the trickle into Thamel across the road. If it is unable to provide poor Nepalis with a better life within its borders, then it should do all it can to help them help themselves. This means raising awareness about the opportunities and risks of working abroad, expediting passport and visa procedures, monitoring employment agencies and prosecuting those found to be exploiting workers, and providing support to our embassies abroad. It also means stepping in firmly and promptly to help Nepalis stranded abroad, be it in Libya or Japan or the Gulf, rather than dithering about in expectation of third-country support or offering 'symbolic' aid to tsunami victims. Having failed the bulk of Nepalis for years on end, it's the least the government can do.

In this New Year, spare a thought for those who are not here to celebrate the occasion with their loved ones. Better, let's think of what we can do to stop Nepal haemorrhaging its future.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

UNSATISFYING FAREWELL

Although I often disagreed with Mr. Jha's analysis, I did always appreciate his clearly written prose, courteous style and uniquely Madhesi perspective ('Charting the Times', Prashant Jha, # 548). I will at the very least miss the editorial variety that he provided to these pages.

That said, I found his final discourse regarding the Maoists and their putative role in Nepal's nation-building experiment to be rather unsatisfying. I know that Mr. Jha is neither a Maoist, nor anything even remotely resembling one. But then, my primary arguments have never been directed against the Maoists or their most enthusiastic armchair champions. My primary argument has always been against the oft-repeated refrain, reproduced yet again in Mr. Jha's final article, that the Maoists' flawed integration into the political process will 'deepen' Nepali democracy.

The Republic and the CA are indeed the offspring first and foremost of the Maoists. No one else in Nepal's spectrum of political groupings even considered adopting these programs until the recalibration of their own platforms that these parties undertook to entice the Maobadis into the mainstream. Nor, in hindsight, is it easy to see how either program has benefited Nepal. The CA is an unsalvageable failure which has yet to demonstrate any capacity to produce a

new organic law for Nepal. The document it is tasked to replace (that of 1990) was itself fully democratic and there has yet to be any public forum or debate as to its merits and supposed demerits. As for the Republic itself, republicanism does not automatically equate to progress by default. Iran, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan come to mind rather quickly. The institutional failure of Nepal's own ganatantric experiment may put it in that unflattering company sooner rather than later.

Equality and inclusion are noble goals to pursue, but this need not entail the wholesale dismantling, reimagining and/or restructuring of the "merely formalistic liberal democracy" of the 1990s, particularly when no one in the Nepali political spectrum, least of all the Maoists themselves, has anything credible to offer for substitution or even recalibration. The militant far left are not the forces to be relied upon for a more inclusive society, at least from the perspective of those of us who still believe that both the form and spirit of liberal democracy are worth preserving intact. The 'peace process' enshrined in the CPA foolishly handed the balance of internal force and the primary political initiative to the Maoists and their fellow travellers on the far left, restraining Nepal's legitimate armed force whilst placing no real restrictions on the activities of a largely unreformed insurgency movement. This asymmetry of force does not give the Maoists any real incentive to reform themselves, but only

to continually escalate their importunities against the state. Mr. Jha is correct to label the political model offered by the Maoists as 'unacceptable'; I would carry the point further by arguing that their methods of exploiting (not ameliorating) longstanding inequalities for the sake of their revolutionary program encapsulates an attitude which simply cannot be accommodated in a parliamentary system, has nothing at all to offer a liberal democracy, and can only make the day of a genuinely equitable and inclusive Nepal even further off.

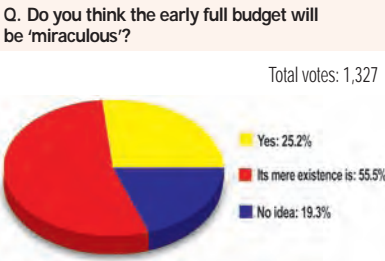
New Delhi's 'hardline position' against the Maoists is an inevitable and necessary adjustment of Indian policy in the wake of the manifest failure of the conciliatory policy India adopted towards the Maoists in 2005 under pressure from the criminally idiotic Sitaram Yechuri and his Left Front cohorts. That policy has created an unbiddable monster in the form of a Maoist-dominated Nepal and a worsening Maoist revolt within India's own borders. India has belatedly realised that its own intrinsic interests have been imperiled by a disastrous policy which, far from delivering a pliant Bhutanesque lapdog in post-monarchy Nepal, has instead multiplied the South Block's headaches. And from a purely domestic viewpoint, the risk of emboldening Maoist hardliners through marginalisation is easily outweighed by the risk of actually allowing these spree-killing brigands free access to the reins of state.

John M. Kelleher

SAVING RARA

Thanks for this article which uses the case study of Rara's fragility to highlight the age-old struggle to protect wilderness areas from both poverty and development ('Protecting Rara from the Future', Kunda Dixit, #548). Experience from elsewhere has shown that only with sustainable development can we use nature's capital for the long-term upliftment of livelihoods. Instant development brings about irreversible destruction of that natural capital and makes poverty worse. You don't have to go far to see the after-effects of such ruin in Nepal. More power to wardens like Durga Poudel for their lonely and often dangerous struggle on the frontlines of the war to protect what is left of our nature.

KiranL



Weekly Internet Poll # 550. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How do you feel about the New Year?





BIKRAM RAI

No war, no peace



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

In recent days, the violence in the Tarai has reached alarming levels. While individual assassinations and kidnappings continue, unarmed civilians are now being targeted in public places with the intention of causing maximum human casualties. The blast in Rupandehi once again brought back the horrifying memories of Madi, when a passenger bus carrying 150 people was bombed by the Maoists in 2005, killing 38 innocent people.

The years following the Madhes movement have certainly brought a qualitative difference to the lives of Madhesis. But living in the Madhes is becoming a dangerous affair. The state has simply failed to take any concrete action to protect the lives and the property of its citizens. The prolonged absence of the state in the Tarai districts has left the people at the mercy of armed groups, who openly extort, kidnap and kill civilians, all in the name of the Madhes and its people.

However, the recurring blasts in the Tarai cannot just be seen as an act of terror by armed outfits operating with supposed 'political agendas'. There is an element of political apathy towards the violence in the region that considers package bargaining at the top as the only solution. This approach completely overlooks the geopolitical vulnerability that people in the Tarai districts face in the form of an open border.

It is quite ironic that New Delhi has been pressuring Kathmandu to curb 'anti-Indian' activities on its soil while incidents of violence continue on the Nepali side of the border. There is enough evidence to point at armed groups operating from across the border. But add to this the ongoing issues of encroachment, and it becomes clear that Tarai insecurity has to be addressed at the diplomatic level and not just as an internal security issue.

Madhesi leaders in Kathmandu are busy deriving political mileage from the instability in the Madhes rather than working with the government to improve security in the region. Not one leader has expressed concern at the deteriorating security situation in the Tarai districts. Some are negotiating portfolios in the government, while others are angry at being left out, but no one seems concerned at the continued loss of life in the Tarai.

There is growing resentment among the Madhesi population, which feels that the Madhes has become the victim of national and international politics. After all, the surge in violence so soon after Bijay Kumar Gachchadar and Rajendra Mahato spoke of alienation and warned of dire consequences can hardly be a coincidence, particularly following the duo's Delhi visit. People have every reason to suspect foul play through collusion with militant groups.

Politics in Nepal has always been tainted by betrayals and reprisals. But seldom before has civilian life been so dispensable. People are dying in the Tarai because of political games at the top. How many more will have to die before they say enough is enough? 🇳🇵

The Madhesi people are pawns in the games their leaders play in Kathmandu

Three weeks ago, there was a deadly bomb explosion inside a packed minibus in Butwal. Of the 28 people injured in the incident, seven critically, two succumbed to their injuries. One was Radha Kandel; the other was a male in his thirties, yet to be identified.

The Butwal bomb was the third in a series of explosions that has terrorised the Tarai that week.

Behind the headline

The mainstream media was full of speculation about the effect on the peace process and constitution writing, but only for a day or two. The bombs disappeared from the headlines as suddenly as they appeared.

Yet for the injured, life will never be the same again. If there was one thing Arjun Kandel, 32, could change, it would be the nightmare of 27 March that took his wife Radha away from him. Arjun had recently returned from Taiwan to take her back with him. "Dai and Bhauju were supposed to board their flight in two days," says his sister Devi Kandel. Lying in his hospital bed, Arjun seems shell-shocked: "What had we done?"

Arjun may walk again, but he doesn't know how to deal with their four-year-old daughter, who still does not know why her parents are not home from the market. Doctors at the B&B Hospital say Radha, 31, died due to excessive blood loss. She had severe facial burns and wounds, and her left leg had had to be amputated.

Arjun now has other worries. His job in Taiwan is uncertain, the hospital bills have crossed Rs 400,000. He has no idea how he will manage.

Basudev Shrestha, VDC secretary of Chhipa of Rupandehi,

remembers the blast but when he came to he was in TU Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu (seen with his daughter, left). He has multiple fractures in his left leg, both his legs have burns, and his heels are severely damaged. His doctor says it will take two and a half months for the fractures to heal, but he will not be able to walk normally again. Basudev has been in government service for 30 years.

On March 27 he was returning from his office in Bhairawa since VDC secretaries in Rupandehi had abandoned the villages for lack of security. "It is difficult to work efficiently being away from the VDC, but we have no choice," Shrestha says, "If I was working in my VDC, I wouldn't be in this situation."

The government has promised Rs 150,000 to the families of the deceased and will cover 75 per cent of medical expenses for the injured. But this will hardly compensate for the personal loss of the victims.

On Wednesday Butwal police arrested three members of the armed group Akhil Tarai Mukti Morcha, who they say planted the bus bomb. APO Dan Bahadur Karki says investigations have shown "encouraging results" but he couldn't give details of the other victim whose body is still at hospital. 🇳🇵 Anurag Acharya



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“We are a soft target”



Binay Bohra, head of the Internet Service Providers Association of Nepal (ISPAN), which shut down web access nationwide for an hour on Sunday, spoke to Nepali Times.

Nepali Times: Why did ISPAN declare an ‘internet banda’ on Sunday?
Binay Bohra: In the past months police have detained or tried to detain directors and employees of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) because they provided internet connections to customers who were alleged to have misused our services for the call bypass racket. This is like holding a telephone company liable for abusive calls, or holding the maker of pressure cookers liable for their misuse as pressure cooker bombs.

But isn’t it possible for ISPs to find out which subscriber is using connections for call bypass?
ISPAN sat down with the authorities and explained that the actions of its customers are a third party issue and need to be dealt in the way you deal with intermediary liabilities. The government agencies and police assured us that they would not be detaining ISP owners and staff. But just the

opposite has happened. The threat of unwarranted police action has created an environment of fear among ISPs and is hampering our ability to provide services and conduct business.
No matter how and where we put our case and how much we cooperated with the agencies concerned, persecution against us did not stop. We simply want a safe working environment where we don't have to worry about going to jail because one of tens of thousands of internet customers misuses the service.

But isn't stopping the internet a bit extreme?
In a perfect society such action would not be needed. But we obviously don’t live in a society where our concerns are heard and resolved. It was about protecting ourselves and our industry against an apathetic government and vindictive telecom operators who are determined to guard their expensive international call business to protect revenues and use government agencies to persecute small operators. We were compelled to take this extreme step out of desperation and as a last resort after exhausting all other options. The culture in our country has become one of protesting through bandas and sadly it has become the only form of protest that works.

But the police say ISPs knowingly allow some subscribers to use connections for call bypass operations?
Call bypass requires internet connectivity and access to the telephone network using mobile SIM cards. People involved in call bypass usually take internet connectivity from an ISP and bulk SIM cards from one of the large operators, Nepal Telecom, Ncell or UTL. When the police raid a

call bypass operation, they identify the ISP that provided the internet connectivity and drag that ISP into the investigation.
But why can’t you help the police crack down on criminals involved in call bypass?
When we suspect or discover that a customer is involved in call bypass, we pass this information to the police through the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA). We have also taken pre-emptive action to screen high-bandwidth customers. We have improved the customer documentation process. NTA already has web access to ISPs’ real time MRTG graphs to monitor the usage patterns of high bandwidth subscribers. So, the accusation that we have not provided data to the authorities is a lie.

Isn't call bypass good for the customer if it is cheaper? Why not just legalise it?
This should be the collective cry of all Nepalis, and it is our demand as well. Large telecommunication companies are charging unjustifiably high rates to poor Nepalis working overseas by making them pay through their noses to call home. Calling Nepal is among the most expensive of all countries in the SAARC region. This is because the big companies refuse to reduce their charges for incoming calls to Nepal. Illegal call bypass operators therefore have a tremendous economic incentive, and had the rates been lower this activity would be reduced without the need for any police action.

In the meantime, what is the solution?
Just as Ncell and Nepal Telecom are not being held responsible for their SIM cards being misused for illegal call bypass, ISPs should not be held responsible for internet connectivity that is misused by its customers. Why this discrimination against ISPs? Obviously the big and strong have protection and we are a soft target. We are already cooperating. We are tired of living in an environment of fear, and would prefer to surrender our licenses to NTA than continue to work in this environment.

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Does Suraj Vaidya mean business or will it be business as usual?



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

With all that *red abir* and *khaada*, were those the election victory celebrations of a business body or the student wing of a political party? That was the question going through my mind upon watching the TV footage of Suraj Vaidya's victory in this week's Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) elections.

The FNCCI bills itself as "an umbrella organisation of Nepal's private sector." But its working definition of that private sector is visibly narrow: a few family-run behemoths that have done well since the time the government handed monopoly licenses some 50-odd years ago, many large trading firms that import goods and sell locally at high

margins, a growing number of businesses outside of Kathmandu that have been started by many locally influential jamindars, and various lobbying groups that push for pro-industry and pro-firm concessions.

Characterising the FNCCI as such is not to criticise it. It is to explain what it is.

As such, one should not expect FNCCI to advance the agenda of entrepreneurship, innovations, and bold thinking, such as by finding ways to better treat Nepal's migrant workers. Nor should one expect it to promote small and medium businesses that provide self-employment to many. Nor does one expect it to push for pro-market and pro-competition economic policies that call for a level playing field.

And so, given its nature and the expectations of members who will presumably want to extract their pound of flesh after having spent more than 50 million rupees on the

elections, can there be a vision for the new FNCCI leadership? Yes, if Vaidya spends his three-year term focusing on these two critical problems facing the private sector.

Image: The Nepali private sector needs a drastic image makeover. It needs to sell itself to the public as a provider of jobs, as a pillar of the community, and as the payers of taxes which in turn pay for public goods. At present, private sector companies are widely and unfairly perceived to be dominated by a few crooks that are seen as tax cheats. This gives the whole sector a bad image at a time when businesses need public support.

Vaidya and his team need not be defensive about the entire range of unsavoury business practices in vogue. But they should use their position to positively sell, through speeches, activities and white papers, the upside

of broader private sector-led growth for jobs and prosperity in Nepal.

Security: Few businessmen think of starting a factory in Nepal for fear of having to deal with militant and politically charged trade unions. So long as Maoist unions remain as active as they are, nobody in his right mind will invest in the type of company that can generate hundreds of jobs.

In the five years since Jana Andolan II, businesses have not enjoyed the fruits of a peace

dividend in the form of security. The numbers of labour strikes, physical attacks, acts of intimidation, and extortion have all gone up. Indeed, the only thing one remembers from the outgoing FNCCI president Kush Joshi's time is his call to unite against the six-day Maoist banda last May. The challenge facing Vaidya's team to enable a secure environment for honest business is big.

But if Vaidya is planning to stick to the FNCCI tradition of getting into bed with politicians, then the celebratory scenes of Wednesday only confirm that like with politics, it's going to be business as usual. 🇳🇵



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Public opinion?



MY TAKE
Damakant Jayshi

Supreme Court (SC) justices Balaram KC, Girish Chandra Lal and Prakash Wasti must be squirming now. Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal has reminded the top court how its ruling dismissing a writ petition on the extension of the Constituent Assembly (CA) can be (mis)interpreted for questionable motives.

The apex court's interpretation of the Interim Constitution while deciding on a writ petition challenging the one-year extension of the Constituent Assembly is coming back to haunt it. In that ruling, the three-member SC bench said that the CA's task was to draft

the constitution and hence it could not expire unless that task was completed. There had been multiple interpretations of what the bench meant.

One Law Commission official wrote in an article in a Nepali newspaper arguing that most interpretations, even by noted constitutional experts, missed a crucial aspect of the SC's wise words: "ahile ko awastha" (the existing situation). The ruling had been made earlier, and on the writ petition challenging the extension on 28 May, 2010; it only came to light after newspapers published the interpretation. The law official said the ruling should be seen in the backdrop of the last extension and not as a blanket endorsement of future extensions.

"Dissolving the

Constituent Assembly is out of question," said PM Khanal on Monday while inaugurating the AGM of the FNCCI. "The assembly has the specific mandate of concluding the peace process and drafting a new constitution. Its fate cannot be altered until the mandate is fulfilled," said Khanal. Oh, and he did not fail to add: "This is the wish of the people as well."

Without a roadmap, there is no point extending the term of the Constituent Assembly

Khanal of all politicians should know what the wish of the people is. Does Devi Prasad Regmi ring a bell? This former cadre of the party led by Khanal slapped him in public in Itahari in January. A loud cry of sympathy reverberated across the country. It was not for Khanal,

but for Regmi.

As for the life of the CA, it is not for the government to decide. Public opinion matters and it can no longer be ignored, as has been the case so far. Another extension of the CA is possible only if there is some tangible progress on the contents of the new constitution.

At least two of the justices on the bench that have ruled on the writ have noted that the ruling was meant for extension on 28 May, 2010. They have said that if there is to be another extension, the court will look at it afresh.

Political parties cannot go on extending the CA's term without convincing the people why they need another extension under the present circumstances. There has been hardly any progress to justify another extension. There is every possibility that another extended term would mirror the one that is about to expire. Moreover, Khanal should be the last person calling for

another extension. He wasted seven months of the extended term, working overtime to dislodge a majority-wielding government led by his party colleague, Madhav Kumar Nepal. Since succeeding in becoming prime minister -of another majority government -he has wasted a further two months in trying to give shape to his cabinet, and is still struggling.

Governance is nearly non-existent, let alone good governance. If government is active, it is on the front of conjuring one plan after another to loot the state exchequer. Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari's 'white paper' is a pointer in that direction. And this government wants another extension.

In the next 40 days or so, the political parties must show us, and not just through cosmetic measures, their tangible roadmap for writing the constitution. damakant@gmail.com





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THIS WEEK

New ministers

Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal inducted 12 UML ministers, including seven state ministers, into his cabinet on Monday. Gokarna Bista, who was appointed minister for energy, was not present to take the oath as he is undergoing treatment at Manmohan Memorial Hospital following an attack by masked assailants just hours after he was appointed. UCPN (Maoist) and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, UML's coalition partners, are yet to name their ministerial candidates. The Maoists have been claiming the Home Ministry as per the seven-point agreement.

Vaidya elected

Suraj Vaidya was elected the new President of the Federation of Nepali Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) on Wednesday. Vaidya secured 307 votes while his opponent, Ajad Shrestha, obtained 283 votes. Bhawani Rana and Pashupati Murarka from Vaidya's panel of candidates and Pradip Jung Pandey from Shrestha's panel have been elected vice-presidents.

Justice for judges

The Judicial Council (JC) on Monday relieved two Appellate Court judges of their duties and issued warnings to four others for incompetence and improper moral conduct. The outgoing Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha proposed the action against Pokhara Appellate Court Judge Om Prakash Subedi and Hetauda Appellate Court Judge Tej Bahadur Karki. Likewise, Sarlahi Judge Binod Prasad Sharma, Argakhanchi Judge Achyut Bista, Parsa Judge Pashupati Acharya, and Jajarkot Judge Sita Prasad Pokharel have been warned of action.



BIKRAM RAI

Brittain in Nepal

CLARE HARVEY

Ilisa Brittain
has woven
the entirety
of her life
into her
layered
paintings of
the female
form

Ilisa Brittain has always been an artist. “One of my earliest memories – I must have been about five – is of sitting down with a pencil and paper and saying to myself, ‘Well, Ilisa, if you’re going to be an artist, you have to learn how to draw faces’,” she says.

The desire to create has never left her, and has culminated with her current exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery at Baber Mahal Revisited. But her journey, from a determined five-year-old to the successful artist she is today, wasn’t straightforward.

Ilisa’s childhood was spent as a ‘water gypsy’ on her father’s yacht in the Mediterranean, returning only when it was time to take her exams. She eventually moved on to study art at Brighton University in the south of England.

Marriage to her UN worker husband, John, meant the resumption of the itinerant lifestyle. She has spent the last twenty years moving from country to country, including China, Uzbekistan, Cambodia, Russia, France and Guinea. During this time Ilisa had three

daughters. Somehow, despite the moves and the madness of motherhood, she managed to keep working, exhibiting in France and Russia, as well as studying figurative painting at the Surikov Academy in Moscow.

“Because my work is concerned with human emotions, motherhood fed into it, rather than being a distraction,” Ilisa says. “Of course, your world turns upside down when you have children, and finding the time to paint was hard, but the experience of having a family deepened my work. Although I do remember having really strong arms from holding a baby in one arm whilst I painted with the other,” she laughs.

Four years ago, Ilisa and her family moved to Nepal, and she says that it is here in Kathmandu that she feels her work has consolidated and matured, enabling her to produce her best pieces to date.

“Coming to Nepal was an inspiration for me,” she says. “Sometimes it’s hard to get the quality of materials I need for my work, but the relaxed pace of life and sheer beauty of the place has

been wonderful.”

Ilisa works seven hours a day in her studio in Patan. She says paintings can take anything from a day to a whole year to complete; however, she usually works on more than one piece at a time. She also runs art workshops from her studio, teaching drawing and painting techniques.

“I love teaching,” she says. “It’s vital to my work, it feeds the studio. I feel that you have to put in to get out, and the energy I put into teaching has been reflected in the paintings I have done since being here.”

Ilisa says her work is synergistic, bringing together various strands of her life: as a mother, wife, teacher, traveller and artist. Her current exhibition, titled ‘Female Substantive’, reflects the different facets and complexity of the roles woman play.

At first glance Ilisa’s paintings appear to be simply a beautiful fusion of the figurative and the abstract, but on closer inspection the viewer sees layer upon layer of textural codes beneath the oil paint: a bracelet, a leaf, a safety pin, or a number.

“My paintings are filled with secrets,” says Ilisa. “I want them to be a bit like a magnet, drawing the viewer in, and asking them to think about the obstacles and chances in their own lives.” ■

Ilisa’s exhibition ‘Female Substantive’ is showing at the Siddhartha Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, until 22 April.

www.internationalartworkshops.com
<http://ilisa-brittain.artistwebsites.com>



Irish Pub, not only does it feel like one, but it's Irish all the way down to the original recipes from the owner's wife. Go green with their fish and chips. *Ananda Bhawan, Lazimpat, 4416027*

Le Bistro Restaurant & Bar, the outdoor dining area invokes a great atmosphere for a night of drinks with friends and family. While they serve a plethora of dishes, it is the Indian food they pride themselves on. *Thamel*

Casa Toscana, varieties of yummy pizzas to try and other Italian delights. Casa Toscana, *Pulchok*



Bu keba, the newest organic restaurant in town, offers continental and Indian food along with chef's originals. *Sanepa*

Milk Coffee 'n Cocktail Cafe, coffee house during the day and a cosy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yarchagumba and molecular cocktails along with the famous Starbucks. *Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg*

Tamarind, a multi-cuisine restaurant, offers a decent range of drinks and food. *Jhameel*

GETAWAYS

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Dhulikhel Mountain Resort, Palanchok Bhagwati Darshan Package with one night's accommodation in the mountain rooms and transport to and from the temple. *Dhulikhel, 4420774*



Nanette's Creperie



SOMEPLACE ELSE

It must be tough being a restaurateur in Kathmandu if you want to draw the locals in. A menu bereft of momos or chicken chilli is a tough sell, and even the fanciest of joints may feel obliged to splice in the usual suspects or variations thereof under the *eesnacks* section. Nanette's Creperie, open for all of two months, insouciantly fills its menus with crepes. Lots of them.

The latest addition to a Jhamsikhel corner already populated by three other eateries, Nanette's provides sweet (and savoury) relief to



those tired of experimenting with a continental mish of steak with mash. Al fresco or within the cute interior, seat yourself at the tables with colour-coordinated placemats and peruse the long list of fill 'er ups. Nanette's is relatively undiscovered, but one suspects not for long.

There's all sorts of reasonably priced crepes here (Rs 130-455), but for simplicity's sake you may imagine your buckwheat

pancakes filled with savoury combos that include cheese, mushrooms, cream, bacon, smoked salmon, spinach or potatoes, or sweet combos of sugar, chocolate, caramel, banana, butter, honey and more. With decent sides of ratatouille, salad, or potatoes. La Suedoise was scrumptious, the delicate flavours of the spinach in cream complementing the richer taste of the smoked salmon. La Forestiere

Gourmande was almost as grand as it promised, with mushroom, bacon and cheese, but perhaps limited by the quality of its ingredients. The goat cheese next time, I promised myself.

For dessert, the exciting sounding Crepe Flambe fell a little flat. Having excused myself to the restroom, I returned to find a dull looking pancake awaiting me, the flame long gone, only the whisky to tickle my palate.

The Apple and Caramel pancake was much better, even if the chewiness of the cooling home-made caramel gummed my teeth together. But by this time, faced with a dining companion sans wallet, I was already plotting my course to the nearest ATM. I casually slipped out, cupping my phone to my ear, began pounding the pavement south, turned back thinking it would be quicker to dash home, then realised halfway I'd left my keys at Nanette's. By the time I made the circuit out to Pulchok and back, I was drenched in the sweat of the unexpected digestive run, and felt I'd hardly done justice to the place. I'll be back! **N**

Nepali Kukur

Head south from the British School to a be-stated junction. Nanette's is tucked away to the right.

Space	★★★★☆
Bread 'n water	★★★★
Service	★★★★
Deal-icious	★★★★
Rep-eat?	★★★★☆



GREEN SCENE

Flower power



BIKRAM RAI

Until a few years ago, the small fountain next to the entrance of Patan Darbar Square was pretty much a massive dustbin. It was not uncommon to see plastic wrappers, cups and cigarette butts floating in the pond's scummy green water.

But take a stroll down to the square today and you'll see fish in the pond, which has functioning fountains. The pond is now lined with benches and strategically placed dustbins for both degradable and non-degradable waste welcome you. And there are neatly maintained flowerpots all around. The brick-paved square now has its own mini-garden.

"I grew up in this area, and when I saw the degraded state of the pond and its surroundings, I felt something needed to be done," says Bijaya Prajapati, president of Children for Green New Nepal (CGNN). Established in 2007, the organisation works to involve school children, youth and anyone else willing to volunteer their time for green projects. At present, CGNN has over 100 active members.

CGNN started the 'flower project' for Patan Darbar Square in 2009 with 30 flower pots. So far, they've installed 468 flower pots, 22 trees, 4 benches and 6 dustbins. Thermocol boxes, used to transport

fish, have been decorated and transformed into flower pots. Installation art made with used plastic bottles are on display next to the pond. CGNN members rotate the responsibility of watering the plants and maintaining the area, and organise major clean-up programs at regular intervals.

Prajapati says that although they had some problems earlier, attitudes have changed. "When we started, a few pots and flowers were stolen, but we continuously replaced them," he explains. "Now we have no such problems and when we work, the community also pitches in."

CGNN's perseverance has certainly paid off. The project it initiated independently has attracted many partners. Akita Campus Net, Patan Durbar Square Conservation Committee and Alliance Française de Katmandou now work with CGNN on the flower project. Even Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City, which was initially sceptical about CGNN's commitment, has for the first time granted CGNN a sum of Rs 40,000. CGNN is also working with the restaurants in the area to install a map of the square.

Recently, CGNN expanded its conservation work to another part of the square, Magnahiti. Over 100 flower pots have already been placed there.

Says Prajapati: "This project has helped enhance the environment of the square. Now we are exploring ways to be economically sustainable so that we can continue our work." ■

Paavan Mathema

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

There are enough signs to indicate that the northern hemisphere has warmed up. The axis of the tropical jet stream, for instance, has shifted northwards, parallel to the Himalaya, paving the way for a series of warm westerly fronts to move towards South Asia and the Himalayan foothills. Fresh satellite pictures confirm that we will see more turbulent winds and occasional rains with thunderstorms, albeit isolated. For the weekend, expect sunny intervals with passing clouds that will raise the Valley's temperature to 30 degrees.

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Kanpur

Nagpur

KATHMANDU

Dhaka

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FRI	SAT	SUN
27-12	29-12	30-11

RANGOLI EASY CLEAN

NO दाग

NO धब्बा

No Daag - No Dhabba, Only Beautiful Walls



BIKRAM RAI

THROUGH THEIR EYES: Children examine photos of brick workers during the 'Brick by Brick' event held at Jawalakhel last Saturday.



BIKRAM RAI

SONG AND DANCE: The Indigenous Artistes' Organisation launch a collection of music videos on the constitution, with Constitutional Committee Chair Nilambar Acharya (second from left), Kamaladi, Saturday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

DRY RUN: Funeral pyres burn above the dry banks of the Bagmati River, Pashupati, Sunday.

Double whammy: heart attacks and infections



Patients who've had heart attacks are a common sight in Nepali hospitals these days. Because most people have no insurance or receive state support, the economic burden for the average Nepali suffering from a cardiovascular illness like a heart attack is crushing, running as it does into hundreds of thousands of rupees. South Asia may be an open textbook for infectious diseases (TB, typhoid, typhus, etc), but these can often be dealt with by a course of antibiotics. With cardiovascular illnesses, the treatment can be much more drawn out.

Forty-year-old Ram Maharjan, for example, was a taxi driver. One day he experienced sharp chest pain with nausea and vomiting, but he drove himself to Bir Hospital where after tests, he was diagnosed as having had a heart attack. He was referred to another

hospital, and after further more expensive investigations, they told him he required a stent (a tube to prop open an artery) for one of his coronary (heart) arteries with severe narrowing. However, he had run out of money for the potentially life-saving procedure of stent placement, having spent it all on preliminary tests. Such a sequence of events is increasingly common in Nepal, where until three decades ago illnesses were generally limited to infectious diseases.

Cardiovascular problems have become so widespread in poor countries such as ours that mathematical modelling has been carried out to determine if taking a preventive pill (a polypill that reduces cholesterol, blood sugar, and high blood pressure, the three important 'controllable' risk factors for cardiac illnesses) after the age of 50 helps. The results were very promising; field trials using inexpensive, generic drugs from the Indian drug company Cipla are underway. Importantly, the benefits derived from taking a polypill need to outweigh the risks (side effects) of taking the drug. In countries like Nepal, where treatment of cardiovascular diseases and their complications can be financially devastating, a well thought out, evidence-based preventive measure is an attractive idea.



In the meantime, we need to drink clean water, avoid fatty food, stop smoking, avoid sugary drinks and instant noodles, eat dal bhat\roti, and go for morning walks. These precautions should be our health mantras. ■

Free bod



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

Going freelance could be the most Nepali of things

By the time you read this, this kalam will once more have wandered off the rails of the 9 to 5 into the seemingly limitless and aimless pastures of the freelance life. It is a landscape with which I am familiar, as I spent a number of years prior to my time with the Times as a travelling editor. So the prospect before me does not fill me with dread. If anything, this time around I step away from the uniformity of office life with some relief and much hope.

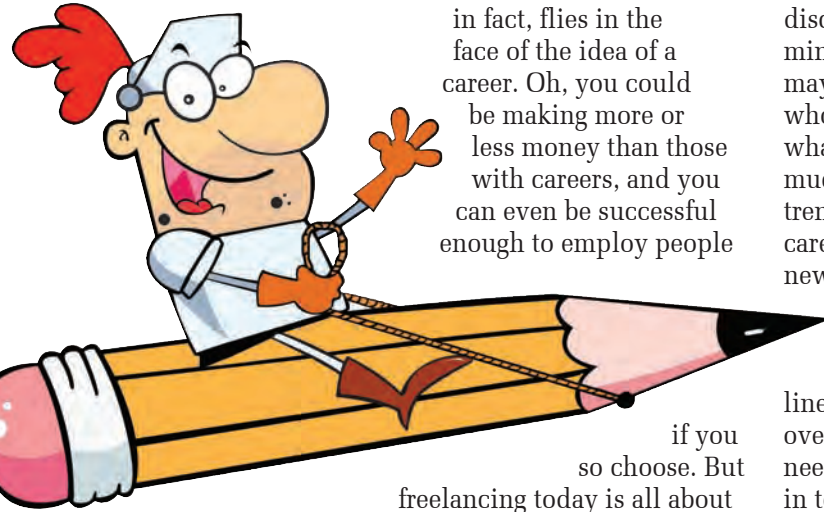
The last time around, I fearfully forsook the security of a steady job to combine freelance work with creative writing, and found that having the relative freedom to organise the whole of one's time (and not just the evenings) was a boon, in more ways than one. But without self-discipline, this meant nothing with respect to the writing that had to be done. This time, mystory

repeats itself, albeit with the advantage of having made some headway with the writing, which means that in a sense, I still have a job (and this space).

Only to the degree that writing is considered a career, of course. For the vast majority of those afflicted with this psychosomatic condition, the physical manifestation of writing is not lucrative, nor even that which can guarantee economic survival. Its validity as a profession is thus open to debate, particularly in societies such as ours only recently cracking the moulds of doctor-engineer-army to explore different ways of earning a living.

But I digress. I meant not to write about writing, but about flying solo. *Ke ho yo phreelance?*

Literally and historically, a 'free lance' is a mercenary who is prepared to point



his lance at anybody if the price is right. In this sense, then, going freelance is just about the most Nepali thing one could be doing, if the idea of calling the Gurkhas mercenaries doesn't ring your jingo.

But the Gurkhas, be they British or Indian or plain Nepali (though not an ethnic group, as every Nepali must have explained at least

once), have never been your garden variety mercenaries. One could say they miss the point of being freelance in the modern world, in that they fight other peoples' wars but are very much focused on having a career, and one with limited but definite possibility of vertical advancement.

Much freelance work, in fact, flies in the face of the idea of a career. Oh, you could be making more or less money than those with careers, and you can even be successful enough to employ people

if you so choose. But freelancing today is all about horizontal advancement, in the sense that you move from client to client but never above them. And what is there to aspire to if you are just the boss of yourself, a status that you only share with the unemployed? It is this perception of suspicious stasis, sometimes with an undeniable leavening of envy, that raises the hackles of those with careers.

Nepal is changing in innumerable ways, not least

in the ways its middle-class youth constructs its livelihoods. The old, respectable professions are still alive, but with more creative options still not as viable as they could be, freelancing – including in the sense of job-hopping across sectors while nurturing 'hobbies' – is on the rise. This will necessarily be disconcerting for the career-minded among us, as it may be for those freelancers who feel they know not what they do. But it is as much a mirroring of a global trend away from company careers as an opening up of new vistas for a generation raised on liberal arts curricula. As long as you meet the bottom line, personal achievement over the course of a lifetime need not be measured only in terms of a directorship here, a government citation there: a linear trajectory for a (false) sense of security. Your portfolio could be a music record, a renovation, a website, a restaurant, a development project, a social movement...anything that reflects your interests and particular aptitudes, and it should be respected as such.

All of which makes this sound like a long-winded justification for one man's tomfoolery. I quit already! 🍷



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“I wouldn’t have come if I had known.” The young Nepali woman in front of me tosses her black hair to a side and looks directly into my eyes. Speaking during her lunch break at college, where she is studying for a diploma in Business and IT, Sachita is commenting on the reduction in the hours that overseas students can legally work in the UK.

As of March last year, foreign students on a course below degree level can only work 10 hours a week, down from 20. Anyone with a visa issued before March can continue to work upto 20 hours until the visa comes up for renewal. This is understandably worrying for a lot of students already committed to two or three-year courses.

"Working 20 hours, we can afford to pay our rent and eat – that's it", Sachita tells me. "On 10 hours, we won't be able to do even that...it's hard to live in this place."

The restrictions also make finding a job more difficult in the first place, as many employers won't take on people who are limited to working 10 hours.

The result is an unexpected drain on resources back home, with students left with little option but to ask their parents for money.



Nepali students struggle in the UK after a cut in the number of hours they are allowed to work legally

Development at the Institute of Public Policy Research, says the Home Office has not been clear about exactly what problem the policy is designed to address. She fears the measure is part of a wider plan to reduce the number of students coming into the country.

But there is also the risk that it may push overseas students into illegal work, where they won't be protected by UK employment law, including the minimum wage.

"We come here for our own development, not to work," another indignant Nepali student says. "We work only to support ourselves while we are here."

The Home Office, though, believes that for too many people, this is not the case.

The students say goodbye to me and pick up their bags from the restaurant floor. They don't want to be late for class. 🍷

Padma left Swayambhu, Kathmandu in 2009. Equipped with a visa that entitled him to work 20 hours a week, he began a course in Business and IT at North West College in Reading. Working at the fast-food chain Subway, he earned about £450 (Rs 52,000) a month. This covered the £220 he pays for rent, £50 for bills, £90 for food, and £40 for travel, with some left over to spend time with his friends. With the recent changes, he now earns only £220, which means a shortfall of £180 every month. At the moment he is borrowing money from friends, but this is obviously not sustainable.

Padma confesses that even before the reduction in legal working hours he found it unexpectedly difficult in the UK. He accuses the education consultancy he sought advice from in Nepal of deliberately misleading him.

"I think they did it on purpose – they told me things that turned out not to be true...things like we could work as much as we needed to." Such consultancies take a cut of the fees when they successfully recruit a student for a UK college. They don't have an incentive to tell the truth about life in Britain.

Since his family can't afford to provide him with any additional financial support, Padma will probably return to Nepal before finishing his course. "It is miserable for me here," he says. "It is like they are trying to make our lives as hard as possible so we have no choice but to go home."

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Millet, buckwheat and cheeno grows aplenty in Simikot, Humla

GORAKH BISTA

RUBEENA MAHATO

Despite decades of food assistance from the government and aid agencies, little seems to have changed in the Karnali region. Food shortages are as bad as ever, and there are claims that dependency on subsidised rice has meant what little was left of cultivation has faltered. The general impression is that the dry and rocky terrain of the mid and far west region cannot sustain wide-scale agriculture and that there is no alternative to trucking in food from the outside. But is this really necessary? Documentary film-maker Gorakh Bista of Srinagar, Humla, doesn't seem to think so.

Karnali already has the crops it needs to feed itself, he says. "If we grow the right crops, there is no reason we can't produce enough food for ourselves," says Bista. He cites the example of Cheeno, or Proso millet, a crop that grows readily in Humla. Cheeno is one of the major winter crops in Karnali but is not as extensively farmed as wheat or paddy. "If we can get people to grow Cheeno instead of the low yielding wheat or rice, there would be enough food for everybody," Bista claims. Resham Amgai, scientist at the National Agriculture Research Council (NARC), cannot agree more. "Cheeno grows well in a dry and cold climate; it does not need much water and can be cultivated from the lowlands to the highlands, making it perfect for places like Humla."

Crops like Kaguno (foxtail millet), barley, buckwheat, beans and finger millet all grow well in mountain

soil, are easily comparable to rice and wheat in terms of nutrition (see box), and have long been the staple of highland people. With proper promotion and wide-scale cultivation, these crops may offer the best long-term solution for hunger in the region. "Rather than spending millions in airlifting substandard rice to Karnali, the government should invest in research and cultivation of hill crops, irrigation and market creation," Bista says. Scientist at the tellingly named Underutilized Crops Unit at NARC, Sumitra Panthi, says, "Millet, buckwheat and beans

The Karnali can feed itself if its unique food resources are harnessed

grow well even in a harsh climate, with limited water and efforts. They are also highly nutritious and can well substitute for rice as a staple." But the preference for rice may mean that production of such crops will go down. "Even in Simikot most people would not be able to tell you about Cheeno today. If the trend continues, most of these crops may die out in a few generations," Bista says. His warning echoes

the fate of quinoa, which until the colonisation of South America was one of the primary crops of the Incas. Despite having been cultivated for nearly 7,000 years, this highly nutritive crop was derided and its cultivation suppressed by the conquering Spaniards. The government's lack of interest in protecting Nepal's hill crops may mean this is not an unlikely prospect. Pantha says that hill crops have long been neglected.

Wholesome

Although looked down upon as lowly food, most hill crops are powerhouses of nutrition. Millet is a good source of iron and magnesium with the highest iron content for any grain barring Amaranth and Quinoa. It has also high protein and carbohydrate content compared to rice. Buckwheat has high levels of protein and the amino acid lysine. It is rich in calcium, magnesium, phosphorous and Vitamin B. Barley is rich in soluble fibre, niacin and iron and is known to reduce cholesterol levels. Amaranth, probably the most neglected of the crops in Karnali, has the highest level of lysine among all grains and a high fibre content.

The government has only made three varieties of millet available in decades, compared to hundreds of varieties of wheat and rice. The Underutilized Crops Unit under NARC has been collecting local varieties, carrying out studies and recommending varieties of hill crops for commercial release for some years now. Studies on buckwheat, finger millet, Cheeno, Kaguno, barley and amaranth are ongoing. But the ultimate challenge may be to get the locals interested in these crops. Says Pantha: "In many places we saw people growing millet as fodder for cattle. The government has to introduce policies to prioritise the production and consumption of these crops." 🇳🇵



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Case against PM

Sagar Pandit in *Nayapatrika*, 11 April

गर्दा पत्रिका

A case against Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal has been filed at the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Ram Sogarath Mahat of Sarlahi, Hajariya filed the case on Friday demanding Khanal be removed from his post immediately.

Sources say Acting Commissioner Bhagawati Kumar Kaffle has held discussions with senior colleagues on how to proceed. This is the first time a case has been filed at the CIAA against the PM.

Mahat has accused Khanal of being unable to check corruption and extend the cabinet for over two months. He had earlier filed a case demanding the PM intervene to check corruption, and claims that Khanal did not do so because he was encouraging corruption himself. His petition reads: “Corruption is endemic in the government as the ministers are involved in promoting such acts. What is the use of a PM who cannot check corruption?”

PM Khanal has promised to appoint officials at the CIAA, and analysts say the fact that the corruption watchdog has been without a commissioner and investigating officials for four years now has encouraged corruption.

“Political leaders often do not show willingness to appoint officials at the CIAA fearing inquiries into themselves,” says an official at the CIAA. A recent report of Transparency International shows that corruption is on the rise in Nepal, and ranked Nepal 146th out of 178 countries in its corruption index.



New mandate?

Parsa, *Kantipur*, 14 April

कान्तिपुर



Nepali Congress General Secretary Bimalendra Nidhi is of the opinion that the present Constituent Assembly has lost its relevance and that parties need to seek a “fresh mandate”. He made this comment at a program organised by the Press Union, Parsa.

“The CA has failed to draft the constitution. So there is no point in extending its term. The alternative to the present mandate is another mandate and the alternative to the CA is another CA,” he said. He cautioned that this was his “personal opinion” and not the official line of his party but suggested that Nepali Congress and the Madhes should be ready for a new mandate.

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नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग



Old man: 2067
(arrows: Power lust, political uncertainty, inflation, violence terror, insecurity)
Baby: 2068

कान्तिपुर Abin in *Kantipur*, 14 April

The economy of energy

DEWAN RAI

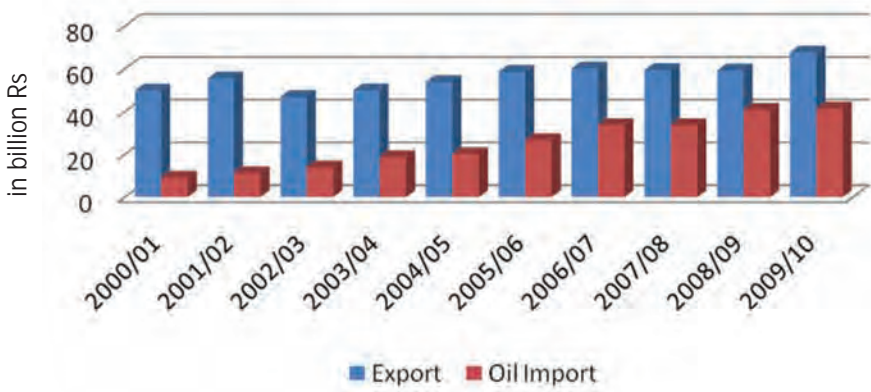
With hydropower development stalled, and no alternative energy sources on the horizon, Nepal has been meeting its energy demands through petroleum products from India. But with import bills amounting to over 60 per cent of the country's export earnings, and the international price of oil on the rise, this is far from sustainable.

During fiscal year 2000/1, petroleum product imports were equivalent to 27 per cent of merchandise exports. With an average growth rate of 10 per cent per annum spurred by rising loadshedding hours, Nepal spent Rs 41.4 billion or 61.5 per cent of its export earnings of Rs 67.2 billion just on petroleum products in 2008/9. This actually exceeded the total export earnings of Rs 40.9 billion from India.

"It explains the state of the country's economy," says Keshav Acharya, chief economic advisor at the Ministry of Finance. "Our foreign currency earnings are spent mostly on petroleum products. This is beyond what Nepal's economy can sustain." If oil prices hit US\$150 per barrel (up from around US\$120 now), then export earnings will have to double just to meet the demand for petroleum products. "We might need funds from other sources," says Deepak Kumar Kharel, senior energy official at the Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS).

WECS has estimated that 400,605 million Gigajoules, equivalent to 9.3 million tonnes of oil or 15,000MW, was consumed in Nepal in 2008/9. Petroleum products accounted for only 10 per cent of this, while almost 78 per cent of demand is met by 18 million tonnes of wood. However, this needs to be limited to 12 million tonnes if the government target of maintaining 40 per cent forest cover is

Import of petroleum products against commodity exports



Nepal is burning all its export earnings on petroleum from India

to be met. The use of forest wood has remained static over the last decade.

There is also a correlation between energy consumption and economic growth. An estimated four million Gigajoules are required for 1 per cent of GDP growth. Nepal's per capita consumption (14.1 Gigajoules) is not only below average (Asia: 35.6), but 89 per cent of the energy consumed is in the non-productive residential sector. The productive industrial and commercial sectors consume 3.3 and 1.3 per cent respectively, while transport uses 5.2 per cent, and agriculture 0.9 per cent. "The practice of energy consumption is neither sustainable nor productive," Kharel says.

What's worse, Nepal has an agreement with the Indian government that states that the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has to import all its petroleum products through the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). This leaves the Nepali economy at the mercy of IOC, in terms of supply and pricing. NOC imports from IOC at an import rather than export parity rate, which means paying extra duties and taxes. Recently, there has been agreement to allow Nepal to import Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) from other sources. But securing an alternate supply remains uncertain, and imminent shortages of the ever-popular gas cylinders loom.

Changing lifestyles, too, fuel the demand

for Indian petroleum products. With many more Nepalis travelling across the country by road and air, transport accounts for 63 per cent of petroleum products. Nepalis are also increasingly opting for private transport; over a million vehicles are registered across the country, half of them motorbikes.

It is a given that Nepal will have to continue to import petroleum products. Situated as it is between the energy-thirsty giants of India and China, third country imports are going to be difficult to negotiate. Barring an increase in foreign currency earnings to maintain the balance of payments, focusing on energy supplies at home appears to be the only sustainable solution.

This of course is easier said than done. According to Acharya, the trend of issuing generation licenses for export-oriented hydropower projects was suicidal. However, projects such as West Seti, meant for the domestic energy market, have failed to begin work in 15 years. The declaration of an energy emergency recently included plans for mandatory deposits of Rs 100,000 deposit per Megawatt to be generated, so that developers are discouraged from sitting on licenses.

The government has also announced plans to produce 2,500MW of electricity within five years. It has proposed an Energy Crisis Control Commission to oversee government programs for power production. Custom duties will be waived for materials related to the production of solar power, as well as income tax for the first 10 years for hydropower companies beginning construction in the next four years.

Another stopgap solution is mixing ethanol with petrol. NOC has been authorised since 2004 to distribute petrol with 10 per cent of ethanol, but has not implemented the measure yet. Petrol mixed with ethanol is already used in the United States, Brazil and India. 🇳🇵

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JN hits beamer off deep square leg

As a country that prefers to eat cricket rather than play cricket, it's time to call a moratorium on all cricket metaphors describing current political innings. Still, for those of you who are not familiar with cricket terminology, here is a quick glossary so you can follow the running commentary about politics in the media:

Agricultural Shot: A batting lineup that includes a Forum candidate willing to give the Agriculture Portfolio a shot.

Bouncer: Similar to a toughie guarding a disco, for example: 'JNK was already batting on a sticky wicket since he started his innings as the Skipper, but his team-mate KP Oli suddenly bowled a Bouncer from behind him by saying he could have him sacked as UML chairman.'

Century: The time it will take for the Batting Team under the present Skipper to conclude the peace process and write a new constitution without Queering the Pitch.

Chinaman: Unnamed left-wing wrist-spinner who spoke to Krishna Bahadur Mahara offering him 50 karod.

Donkey Drop: The Ass has absolutely no idea what this is, but it has a nice ring to it



Constituent Assembly.

"Howzat": Blood-curdling cry, often emanating from cabinet members, when the Finance Minister is manhandled while trying to present the budget. The Speaker is not required to rule on the physical appeal for dismissal unless asked in this way. But, if asked, he is mandated to form a Task Force, an Inquiry Board or an Investigation Commission.

Jockstrap: Also known as 'groin-guard', mandatory gear for all newly nominated ministers whose gonads could be the targets of well-aimed Yorkers, especially if they are fielding at Silly Point.

Leg Break: A form of bowtick carbuy practiced during the war by Baddie Bowlers, but still being employed selectively in order to dismiss opposition Batsmen from time to time. Also known as Leg Bye-bye.

Luncheon: The first of the two intervals (see also: Drinks Break) taken during a full day's session of the House, which usually occurs at

lunchtime at about 12:30pm Indian Standard Time and can last anywhere up to three hours.

Match Fixing: The accepted behind-the-scenes method of cobbling together a coalition government which involves bribing players with the promise of cabinet berths. For example, the Maobaddie Executive Committee had decided secretly to match fix as follows:
PKD 4 ministries
Kiran 4 ministries
BRB 2 ministries
NKS 1 ministry
Unfortunately, Awesome and Kiran still haven't been able to decide whether it should be Coms Mahara or Deb who should bat for the Home-run ministry. And Jhol Gnat's cabinet seems jinxed from the start, the water minister got hit by a Beamer just as he was being appointed, and the only woman nominee to the Team refused to swear.

No Balls: This happens when an ex-minister repeatedly shows a lack of intestinal fortitude in the field and is obsessed with Quickies with Maidens.

One Day International: A junket in which the Finance Minister flies half-way around the world for a one-day international conference so he doesn't have

to go after fake VATSmen. **Overthrow:** Prolonged poor delivery could lead to the fielding team staging a violent takeover, leading to a batting collapse. Rehearsal is the Red Shirt Rally on May 1 during which Com Bigplop's People's Volunteers Mobilisation Bureau will try to run out Awesome's YCL Batsmen. Avoid driving around town that day.

Partnership: An alliance of convenience by Batsmen from two parties with completely different ideologies, for example between PKD and JNK, that lasts as long as one of them is not a Golden Duck.

Powerplay: The block of overs that offers temporary advantage to the coalition in an endgame struggle to be in government on 28 May.

Rest Day: Every day.

Wicked Keeper: Another name for party boss, the guy who is Caught Behind while keeping crooked extortees happy.

Yorker: Opposite of Googly, as in: 'PKD delivered a Yorker on a jockstrap-less BRB by calling him an Indian stooge. BRB then quickly bowled him a Googly in retaliation.'





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