Armed riot police guard a rally on Wednesday in Kathmandu by a Buddhist organisation opposed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a committee for the development of Lumbini. Security has been tightened in Kathmandu ahead of the visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao on 20 December. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has steered a careful path between Nepal’s giant neighbours, trying to allay their security concerns. India is worried about infiltration of Islamist organisations through the open border, smuggling of fake Indian currency, and even the activities of northeastern militants. China, meanwhile, has always been wary of free Tibet activists based in Kathmandu.

So far, Bhattarai has assured the neighbours and the international community that his priority is to restore political stability by completing the peace and constitution process in the next few months. With Maoist camps being decommissioned, the next on his agenda is to lure the NC and UML into government, and complete the constitution by 30 May 2012.

**Guns and nuns**

**By the Way**

The rat race

BY THE WAY  p3

by Anurag Acharya

The rat race

nepaltimes.com

INTerview with Sushil Koirala

Guns and nuns

A

armed riot police guard a rally on Wednesday in Kathmandu by a Buddhist organisation opposed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a committee for the development of Lumbini. Security has been tightened in Kathmandu ahead of the visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao on 20 December. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has steered a careful path between Nepal’s giant neighbours, trying to allay their security concerns. India is worried about infiltration of Islamist organisations through the open border, smuggling of fake Indian currency, and even the activities of northeastern militants. China, meanwhile, has always been wary of free Tibet activists based in Kathmandu.

So far, Bhattarai has assured the neighbours and the international community that his priority is to restore political stability by completing the peace and constitution process in the next few months. With Maoist camps being decommissioned, the next on his agenda is to lure the NC and UML into government, and complete the constitution by 30 May 2012.

**Guns and nuns**

**By the Way**

The rat race

BY THE WAY  p3

by Anurag Acharya

The rat race

nepaltimes.com

INTerview with Sushil Koirala

Guns and nuns

A

armed riot police guard a rally on Wednesday in Kathmandu by a Buddhist organisation opposed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a committee for the development of Lumbini. Security has been tightened in Kathmandu ahead of the visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao on 20 December. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has steered a careful path between Nepal’s giant neighbours, trying to allay their security concerns. India is worried about infiltration of Islamist organisations through the open border, smuggling of fake Indian currency, and even the activities of northeastern militants. China, meanwhile, has always been wary of free Tibet activists based in Kathmandu.

So far, Bhattarai has assured the neighbours and the international community that his priority is to restore political stability by completing the peace and constitution process in the next few months. With Maoist camps being decommissioned, the next on his agenda is to lure the NC and UML into government, and complete the constitution by 30 May 2012.

**Guns and nuns**

**By the Way**

The rat race

BY THE WAY  p3

by Anurag Acharya

The rat race

nepaltimes.com

INTerview with Sushil Koirala

Guns and nuns

A

armed riot police guard a rally on Wednesday in Kathmandu by a Buddhist organisation opposed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a committee for the development of Lumbini. Security has been tightened in Kathmandu ahead of the visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao on 20 December. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has steered a careful path between Nepal’s giant neighbours, trying to allay their security concerns. India is worried about infiltration of Islamist organisations through the open border, smuggling of fake Indian currency, and even the activities of northeastern militants. China, meanwhile, has always been wary of free Tibet activists based in Kathmandu.

So far, Bhattarai has assured the neighbours and the international community that his priority is to restore political stability by completing the peace and constitution process in the next few months. With Maoist camps being decommissioned, the next on his agenda is to lure the NC and UML into government, and complete the constitution by 30 May 2012.

**Guns and nuns**

**By the Way**

The rat race

BY THE WAY  p3

by Anurag Acharya

The rat race

nepaltimes.com

INTerview with Sushil Koirala

Guns and nuns

A

armed riot police guard a rally on Wednesday in Kathmandu by a Buddhist organisation opposed to Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal leading a committee for the development of Lumbini. Security has been tightened in Kathmandu ahead of the visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao on 20 December. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has steered a careful path between Nepal’s giant neighbours, trying to allay their security concerns. India is worried about infiltration of Islamist organisations through the open border, smuggling of fake Indian currency, and even the activities of northeastern militants. China, meanwhile, has always been wary of free Tibet activists based in Kathmandu.

So far, Bhattarai has assured the neighbours and the international community that his priority is to restore political stability by completing the peace and constitution process in the next few months. With Maoist camps being decommissioned, the next on his agenda is to lure the NC and UML into government, and complete the constitution by 30 May 2012.
A world leaders gather at an environment summit in Durban to change climate change is once
more in the headlines. Nepal is in fact in Durban with a 30-member delegation. The global recession has thrown the entire Kyoto Protocol process on reducing global warming into doubt.

Developed countries say they can no longer afford to clean up the carbon they have pumped into the atmosphere since the industrial age, backing down from pledges made at Kyoto to help poorer countries mitigate the effects of climate change. Large developing countries like China, India, Brazil and Indonesia see no reason why they should sign binding cutback commitments if the rich countries don’t put their money where their mouth is.

As we have argued in this space before, Nepal’s balance of payments gap with India is only going to grow in future making us even more dependent on the southern neighbour.

The situation is right under our noses. Making the switch to a hydropower-based economy is both the short- and long-term solution. We can give speeches until we are blue in the face in Durban about how the western countries should compensate us for our melting glaciers, or to help us adapt and/or mitigate, but if we don’t have a plan to wean this country away from fossil fuels we might as well forget about it.

We don’t expect Nepali politicians to get fired up about global environmental crisis which will start submerging coastal areas in 50 years time. They need a paradigm shift to start thinking of climate change not in ecological terms, but economic ones. We need to ensure that future generations of Nepalis (50 million of us by 2030) will inherit a country that is self-sufficient in domestically-generated renewable energy to meet their transportation, industrial and household needs.

Aside from that, there are some environmental steps we can take right away. The ICGMD report released this week in Durban warns us of the accelerated decline in the mass balance of ice and snow in the Himalaya. As the snowlines recede and glaciers retreat, the Himalaya will be mostly rocks, reducing their albedo effect and accelerating melt. We can start by cleaning up our own smoke stacks and car exhausts.

In the coming years, climate change will exacerbate all other crises that Nepal already has to cope with: flash floods, droughts, erratic monsoons, lack of irradiation, rivers going dry in summer, forest fires, to name a few. Bolstering their capacity to cope with these crises will better their resilience to climate change as well.

Maybe we should have just sent the minister to Durban to deliver his speech, and the rest of the delegation should have stayed home to plan for the future.

**KINGDOM WITHIN THE REPUBLIC**

Progress is indeed a double edged sword, as Calin Keams points out in the article (“The Kingdom within the Republic”, #581). However, it is good to see the locals of Mustang are aware of these delicate issues. I wish them luck and hope that they are really able to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Daniel J Meisel
The rat race

The parties are competing for their share of credit on peace and constitution.

BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

From Girija Prasad Koirala to Pushpa Kamal Dahal, from Madhav Nepal to Jhal Nath Khanal, each prime minister came and went for the same reason: he wanted to be the one to take credit for concluding the peace process and constitution.

One hundred days ago, Baburam Bhattarai became the fifth prime minister in five years to lead a transitional government. Chances are he won’t be the last.

The Maoist camps are being decommissioned and the peace process is entering a decisive phase. Talks about a national unity government are rife. The 20th clause in the 7-point agreement signed on 2 November states: ‘The formation of the national consensus government will begin once the peace process and constitution building picks up momentum.’

Although there may be disagreement about what exactly constituted ‘momentum’, the agreement provides adequate incentive for the major parties to cooperate. Roadblocks in the peace and constitution are less about the process and more about what follows immediately after. In a newspaper interview this week Bhattarai admitted that the parties are competing for a larger share of credit for concluding the peace and constitution so they can reap rewards in the run up to elections.

The Maoists have been forced to compromise on their agenda of ‘people’s constitution’ and are less likely to concede the government leadership, as they feel they have given away too much for too little. Their disgruntled hardliners and ethnic constituencies will keep the Bhattarai faction on its toes, lest they relent to opposition pressure.

The Nepali Congress, on the other hand, will not allow the Maoists to run away with all the credit for the peace process. NC President Sushil Koirala feels that the party hasn’t got due share of recognition for its “historic” role in the peace process. He told us on Wednesday: “The Maoists want everything under their own leadership. The peace process, the constitution declaration and maybe the elections as well. What do we get then?”

The UML will not stake its claim for the leadership, neither is it going to be third time lucky. But it is aware that a popular Maoist party will weaken its left vote bank in the next elections and will probably back NC’s candidacy for the national unity government.

The Madhesi front, although still a formidable force, have been embarrassed among their constituency after recent corruption exposés. They have thrown away another great opportunity to consolidate their position as the regional power. The national unity government will limit their presence and influence in the national politics, and they will once again be tempted to use the ‘One Madhes’ slogan to revitalise their image.

To sum it up, we are witnessing the end of coercive politics and the beginning of realpolitik in Nepal. The parties will have less and less incentive to mobilise youth wings like they did in the last few years, in order to salvage their international image. The callback of the nation-wide strike by the Youth Association Nepal after the foreign embassies cautioned the parent party UML is a case in point.

The Supreme Court verdict will also act as an effective deterrent against ‘business as usual’ attitude and the parties will be forced to look for compromise. But time is of the essence. The clock is already ticking and 30 May 2012 is not that far away.

Portuguese writer Jose Maria de Eca de Queiroz once remarked, “Politicians are like diapers, often when they are changed it is for the same reason.” Having a consensus government may not be a bad idea.
Toontime in Kathmandu

“We have the talent and the infrastructure for animation, it is only matter of time.”

When US-based animator and film maker Mike Merell entered the doors of the animation studio, Incessant Rain Animation Studio (IRAS), in Kathmandu last month he was astounded by what he saw.

“There is an immense amount of talent here with great ideas,” says Merell, “and with the infrastructure they are using, I see a lot of potential.”

Merell was here to train the animators at Incessant Rain, which is headed by Kiran Joshi, a former Disney VFX Supervisor. Joshi had worked as Merell’s supervisor on The Hunchback of Notre Dame, and had been trying to get his friend to come to Nepal to work with his animators.

With over 20 years of experience in both computer animation and live action, Merell has worked on animated films like Atlantis, Chicken Little and Gnomeo and Juliet. Working for 12 years at Walt Disney Feature Animation, he has helped transition Disney’s 2D iconic characters, Ariel, Donald Duck, and Simba from The Lion King into the 3D for the theme park film Mickey’s Philharmagic.

Merell worked closely with the animators at Incessant Rain for over two weeks, helping them particularly with character animation, which involves giving a character its unique personality. “Mike gave us a different perspective and helped us apply new techniques to give our characters more gravity,” says animator Loojaw Manandhar.

Besides Merell, Joshi has invited art director Vaughn Wright, compositer Phillip Broste, animator Matt Onheiber and tracking supervisor Bryan Burger to share their inputs. Joshi says the present animation curriculum is poor in Nepal and that the instructors have limited knowledge of animation software and no production experiences. “So whenever possible, I try to bring in experienced animators,” he adds, “we get inspired by them, and hopefully they get inspired by Nepal too.”

Incessant Rain has played an important role in promoting animation industry in Nepal. The company set up shop in Nepal and has outsourced animation deals from Hollywood studios, working on projects such as Diwali with Mickey & Donald, Karate Kid 2, Zombie Land, Death At Funeral, Thirty Minutes or Less, Burlesque, Devil and Red. It was responsible for Nepal’s first fully animated and indigenously-crafted commercial for Ace Development Bank’s rhino campaign.

“There has been an increase in interest in animation but the market is still not ready for the high-end animation work,” says Joshi. Quality animated products cost time as well as money and not many local companies are willing to invest. But Joshi is positive about the future, “We have the talent and the infrastructure, it is only matter of time.”
Radhesh Panth’s appointment as the CEO of the newly-formed Nepal Investment Board came as a breath of fresh air for people in the business circle. However, Nepal’s politically partisan environment has meant that his appointment is already embroiled in controversy.

On paper, Panth, a seasoned banker, is among a handful of Nepalis who fit the job description and his past credentials confirm that he is capable of attracting new investors. But there is an inherent downside of being appointed the head of a government-created enterprise.

Most government-created enterprises are formed through a similar process: a multilateral donor agency comes up with a bright idea of starting a public-private enterprise; the idea then goes through months or sometimes years of gestation period; at some point, the parliament sets up guidelines for the enterprise and the government then promises to recruit the “most qualified” person. Problems emerge once the head of the enterprise is appointed. The government slowly starts to interfere in the functioning of the enterprise, often in blatant violation of the guidelines. Within a few years the promising CEO is forced to quit and replaced by political cronies and the enterprise ends up becoming just another lucrative employment centre for political party cadres.

Nepal Tourism Board is a prime example of such a convoluted process. The Investment Board and Panth are also highly susceptible to political games. Their success will depend on how Panth goes about creating a professional culture within his organization and how well he keeps up with investors’ expectations.

The investment sector relies heavily on three variables: perceptions, consistency and reliability and a diverse, competent, and professional staff is best suited to deliver these goals. Panth as CEO will need to pay careful attention to the hiring process. Staffs can be locals or foreigners, but their appointments should be entirely based on their qualifications, not their political affiliations. Only by controlling the type of people who work in the institution will Panth be able to deliver positive results, keep investors happy and avoid unwanted interference.

Panth must also be able to gain the confidence of investors and maintain their support for an extended period of time. His top priority should be to address the concerns that investors already have about Nepal from political instability to the enforcement of contracts to labour union disputes. However, the board alone cannot solve such serious issues and will need political and public support from the PM’s office as well as the media. As Panth gets ready to undertake his responsibilities, his peers as well as young Nepali professionals will be closely scrutinizing his performance. Here’s wishing him all the success because Nepal desperately needs to attract investors and develop its power, infrastructure and agricultural sectors.

CEO of Nepal Investment Board will have to walk on a very tightrope during his tenure.

The road ahead
From 8-12 December the capital will host the ninth edition of the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF). The theme of this year’s festival is ‘Tourism and Gender’ and the 52 documentaries being screened will focus on the rewards and challenges of living in the mountainous regions of the world. The subject matter of the films include migration, human rights, environment and culture.

The 17 films in the festival are competing for top three positions judged by an international jury consisting of Helena Mieloen, John Innerdale and Sanjeev Upreti. There will be special screening of six Finnish films from the Tampere Film Festival as well as a category called Nepal Panorama which will showcase six films by Nepal’s documentary directors. In between film screenings, guests can attend photo and book exhibitions, try their hand at the ‘Name your Himal Quiz’ or participate in interactive panel discussions on topics such as distribution and marketing of documentaries.

8-12 December
Rastriya Sabha Griha (City Hall) and Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium
Monday, 12 December

11:00 AM Cultural Vignettes of Nepal (45')
Nepal, dir: Toni Hagen
Moving images from the 1950s.

12:00 PM Long Distance Love (58')
Sweden, 2009, dir: Magnus Gurtner and Elin Jonsson
A Kyrgyz migrant is home alone in Russia.

2:00 PM Fahrt Ins Risiko: Der Manali-Leh Highway (The Manali-Leh Highway - India’s Road to the Himalayas) (45')
Germany, 2010, dir: Holger Preusse
Life on a mountain highway.

3:00 PM War = Love in Kabul (68')
Germany, 2009, dir: Helga Reidemeister
A pair of star-crossed lovers in Afghanistan.

5:00 PM Award Ceremony

Tuesday, 13 December

11:45 AM Mr.-legged! (50')
Latvia, 2009, dir: Andris Gauja
It’s the women who migrate for work.

12:30 PM Cultural Vignettes of Nepal (45')
Nepal, dir: Prabesh Subedi
Dhaulagiri - far from the maddening crowd.

1:30 PM Panel Discussion: Role of Film Festivals in Promoting Local and Indigenous Cultures

Friday, 16 December

10:30 AM Family Instinct (58')
Latvia, 2010, dir: Andris Gauja
A young mother copes with poverty and violence in remote Latvia.

11:45 AM As Natašechnin (We Still Live Here) (56')
Bulgaria, 2009, dir: Tzvetan Tzvetanov
It’s the women who migrate for work.

3:15 PM The Town of Badante Women (70')
Bulgaria, 2009, dir: Stefan Komandarev
It's the women who migrate for work.

4:15 PM Der Vulkan Lebt (Mount St. Helens) (51')
Austria, 2009, dir: Jörg Daniel Hissen and Heinz Leger
Cinematographic impression of a recovering volcanic landscape.

Monday, 12 December

1:00 PM Discussion: Pitching, Marketing and Distributing Films for an International Market

Tuesday, 13 December

2:30 PM The Prophet (43')
UK, 2010, dir: David Leon
A Spanish climber’s quest to conquer 8000m summits.

5:00 PM Path of Roses- A Girls’ Skiing Episode in Kashmir (25')
Switzerland, 2011, dir: Eva Walkner and Marcel Karp
Female freeskiers experience Gulmarg.

9 - 15 DECEMBER 2011
#582
7
No illusions anymore

Al Jazeera documentary humanises the statistics of the peace process

captured by state security, raped and killed. Chandra left his simple farmer parents, and became a Maoist ‘whole timer’ taking part in the battle of Syangja and the ambush at Krishna Bhir in 2005, losing some close comrades. The documentary traces Chandra’s life in the Shaktikhor Camp after the war, his involvement in the cultural tropes in which he was a flutist, how he met his wife-to-be Rupa. In one poignant scene, Chandra is leaving the camp in January 2010 after being ‘disqualified’ and bids a camera shy goodbye to his pregnant wife. Chandra signs up for a UN-sponsored skill training and learns to repair mobile phones, and the return home to his scenic village below Himalchuli feels a bit like a boy coming home from boarding school. His favourite goat doesn’t recognise him, he fixes things around the house. Soon, his wife and daughter join him.

Chandra’s mother recalls how during the war, her smiling son often came to her in her dream to say he was all right. But Chandra himself had nightmares of the battles he fought in. “We were confident that our vision of a new Nepal would come true, it is very disappointing that our own party abandoned us,” Chandra says wistfully to the camera.

Chandra soon has to return to the city (he has joined the YCL) but gets more and more disillusioned that his party gone off track’ and of sitting around doing nothing. His life now revolves around his family.

He says: “We wanted to build the country. But I feel I haven’t even been able to help my family, how can I help my country?”

Kanda Dixit

Yak Restaurant, provides authentic Tibetan cuisine at an affordable price.

Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice in your life with their pad thai or green curry. If you can’t handle the heat, try one of their western dishes instead. Thamel, 1am to 6pm, 5010101

Dhokaiama Cafe, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. Your oasis in the heart of the city, easy walk from new Bhat Bhateni Supermarket. Patan Dhowal, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113

Irish Pub, for the simple reason that the place actually feels like a bar. Don’t miss out on their Irish coffee. Lazimpat, Ananda Bhawan, 4416027

Manny’s Eatery and Tapas Bar, scrumptious paniri, sandwiches and more lunch delicacies starting at Rs 199. Manny’s also offers a satisfying assembly of a unique continent cuisine. Open for lunch and dinner and presents Tapas Bar for you to unwind and relax. Jawalakhel Shaligram Complex, 0360919

Y ou get hit by statistics all the time in post-conflict Nepal: 16,000 killed in ten years, 1,387 disappeared, 19,662 ex-Maoists officially in camps, 3,000 not in camps anymore, more than 6,500 opting for integration.

Then there are the 12,648 Maoist fighters who were disqualified by UNMIN because they were either not fighters at all, did not appear for verification, or were below 18 when they joined the Maoist Army. Of these, 2,973 were minors.

After a while, these numbing numbers don’t mean anything anymore. But by following one former Maoist guerrilla from the time he got ‘disqualified’ by UNMIN to the present, film maker Sulina Shrestha has brought out the sacrifice, pain and loss to an international audience. Shrestha’s documentary, ‘The Disillusioned Soldier’, was aired on Al Jazeera this weekend and humanises the war like no other recent television report.

Chandra Bhakta Shrestha was just 15 when he joined the Maoists in his native Gorkha. His sister was among a group of female guerrillas
Vesper Café, has quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak wraps. Jhamsikhel

Café Du Temple, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and the beautiful rooftop view. Patan Durbar Square, 5527127, Boudha, 2143256

Jazoo, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special and relaxing conversation. Bring your garçons (et vos filles) keep us winter proof and your heat lamps and fire pit a balmy summer’s night; summon a perfect date for skylight and open-air court timer. Your slatted wooden evictions.

The Last Resort, be a part of the Bungy or Biking Jump Event over the Bhote Koshi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border. Fees: Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until December, the Last Resort Sales Office, Mandala Street, Thamel, 4700525

Holiday at Grand Norling Hotel, Gokarna. One night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000. 447948

Dreaming of the Dreamer

At 22, not many are thinking about writing a book. But Rajeev Balasubramanyam not only published his first novel, he also won a Betty Trask for it.

“I started writing when I was quite young,” says Rajeev. “It was my escape from reality while I was growing up.” Born and raised in the UK, Rajeev has published two novels so far, in Beautiful Disguises and The Dreamer; and several short stories. He has also won Clarissa Luard Fiction Award and an Arts Council Writers’ Award.

The writer is now working on a collection of short stories that delves into the change in attitudes towards South Asians after 9/11 and the 7 July bombings in England, and around the world. “I once sat down on a bench and the person next to me moved two places,” explains Rajeev. “The environment became very hostile after that.” Both of his books have ties to his Indian roots, but Rajeev says his future work need not be limited to what is usually expected from an Indian writer.

Rajeev will be talking to Gopal Siwakoti Chintan of the TU Centre for Human Rights at Tribhuvan University, as part of the Quixote Cove’s Tavern Tales series this Friday. The two will talk about his book. The Dreamer and about racism in the UK. He will also read from his short story titled, The Day George Bush (Sr.) Came to Use the Bathroom.

9 December, 3.30 pm, Ramalaya, Pani Pokhari, Kathmandu.

Le Sherpa

Tip #1. Get an egg timer. Your slatted wooden skylight and open-air court summon a perfect date for a balmy summer’s night; your heat lamps and fire pit keep us winter proof and your garçons (et vos filles) are eager to serve. But an inviting atmosphere and pleasant service however necessary are not sufficient. Even though we were the only patrons at the time of review, the turnaround from kitchen to table for two plates took half an hour.

Tip #2. Say cheese. Once our order had arrived, at that point anything would have sated our appetites. Sadly, the ham and cheese crêpe was subpar and lacking in fromage. Google ‘béchamel’.

Tip #3. Go fish. Save for the white wine sauce, the gourmandises de l’ocean (with a title that could only tease) was a letdown. Overcooked, the sole fish and tiger prawns were rubbery. Although not listed as a pasta dish, much to our surprise, it came with a nest of plain linguine. At Rs 815, as the French would say, “Quelle arnaque!”

Tip #4. Burn, bébé, burn. Surely, a traditional French sweet like a mousse au chocolat or a tarte au citron would redeem Le cher Sherpa. Perhaps, we made the wrong choice. The crème brulée consisted of an uneven, grainy top, a starchy custard and an unpleasant aftertaste. The ultimate litmus test to a well-torched crème brulée take a spoon and gently tap the caramelized surface. If it cracks, parfait! If it cuts through without a hitch, it isn’t brulée.

Tip #5. Reservez s’il vous plaît. Le Sherpa, do yourself a favor and reserve a table at Délices de France in Thamel or Chez Caroline or Sol at Babar Mahal Revisited for a course or two in French. Marco Pollo

North on Lazimpat pass the Shangri-la Hotel on your left, and turn right into Ramalaya.

pictures by Marco Pollo

Service: ★★★★★
Bread ‘n water: ★★★★☆
Space: ★★★★★
Deal-icious: ★★★☆☆
Repeat?: ★★★★☆
The Checklist

Atul Gawande. His parents, also doctors, are Indian immigrants and Gawande very cogently states that four generations after the first aviation checklist went into use, checklists are now finally used in medicine to catch mental flaws inherent in all of us: lack of memory, thoroughness and attention. He thinks checklists provide a kind of cognitive net. And to follow. Gawande thinks that our ideas need updating, and recalls the miraculous survival of all on board a US airliner that crashed into the Hudson River in January 2009 after flying into a flock of geese on takeoff.

The journalists who covered the story were clearly disappointed because rather than talk about the amazing landing with romantic overtones, the captain of the plane emphasized the checklist that he followed that saved the lives of the passengers.

In the world of surgery, checklists can be especially very relevant. Gawande devised a 90-second checklist that reduced deaths and complications by more than one-third in eight hospitals around the world, at essentially no extra cost and for almost any kind of operation. All of this seems too good to be true, and yet the facts speak for themselves. Checklists are clearly relevant for Nepal as well.
As hospitals go, Nepal’s oldest hospital makes the news for all the wrong reasons: corruption, mismanagement and filth. However, Bir Hospital is becoming a model for recycling hospital waste not only for other hospitals in Nepal but around the world as well.

Each year hospitals in Nepal generate more than 365 tons of medical waste with most of it thrown into municipal garbage dumps: syringes, plastic, bandages and even some human body parts. In the absence of proper storage, disposal facilities and sterilisation instruments like autoclave and incinerators, Bir Hospital was dumping 323 kg of infectious waste into the public garbage system every day. Not surprisingly, waste had become a major source of infection among patients and staff exposed to the polluted environment.

Last year, the Health Care Waste Management Program was launched with the Healthcare Foundation-Nepal (HECAF). Today, Bir is quickly becoming a pioneer in the field of hospital waste management as the hospital now segregates waste at the source significantly reducing the toxicity. The waste is then thoroughly disinfected and passed along for recycling and reuse.

“We have been following non-incineration techniques to manage medical waste because of the risks associated with burning them,” says Mahesh Nakarmi, director of the Health Waste Management Program.

Organic waste is fermented in underground digesters to generate methane gas which is then used for cooking. Non-biodegradable waste is recycled and sold to hawkers or used to make handicrafts. The hospital has also begun vermicomposting to turn used cotton and gauge to create compost manure and hopes to sell 32 tons of fertilizer annually.

So far the hospital is recycling nearly 80 per cent of its total waste and the program has improved overall hygiene at the hospital. Ms. Tulsi Malla of the surgical ward believes this has had a positive effect on the recovery of patients. “The patients are recovering faster, because the rate of infection from waste has been reduced drastically. The program should have started much earlier,” she said. The centralised health waste management system has made all wards mercury-free and there is increased injection safety in the hospital.

The program is also becoming commercially viable. With the hospital earning Rs 30,000 a month selling fertilizer the monthly cost of disposing of other waste has been considerably reduced. Even though the hospital is yet to recover the handling cost for waste management, officials believe that good recycling and responsible waste management will pay for itself in the future.

During its initial phase the program was implemented in 20 wards and the hospital aims to cover the remaining wards in the next six months. The hospital staffs are pleased with the success of the Hospital Waste Management Program and believe that it has boosted their confidence and made them more committed.
A refuge from the world

When Terence R Bech came to Nepal in 1964 as a Peace Corps volunteer, he may not have imagined how this country’s music and culture would move him.

In the next few years, Bech traveled 15,800 km across Nepal recording folk music, collecting musical instruments and translating lyrics. He traveled to remote districts with a backpack weighing 40 kg, and a porter carrying his Uher tape recorder and batteries.

In one such expedition, he suffered a cut above his right eye in a fall. The nearest doctor was a three week walk away, so he stitched the wound himself using a mirror and his good eye. “The locals loved my demonstration,” he recalls, “luckily they couldn’t understand the four letter words used in the absence of painkillers.”

By the time he left Nepal in 1966, Bech had collected 260 hours of recordings in 400 open-reel phonotapes, 200 musical transcripts, 120 musical instruments, 7,500 song texts, 41 life history studies of Nepali musicians, along with thousands of photographs. These were housed in the Archive of Traditional Music at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Last month, Terence Bech gave Indiana University the permission to provide copies of the Terence R Bech Collection of Nepali Music to Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP) in Patan. The collection will be available to researchers soon.

In an email interview, Bech said his collection was done “more as a hobby than an academic”. He is being modest. The collection is invaluable, a meticulous record with an index of language, name of performers, musical instruments, cultural context or relevance, how the performer came to learn the song, occasions during which the songs are performed etc. The quality of sound in the recordings is exceptional.

Bech went on to climb K2, became a sailor and an Arctic explorer. He is now living with his wife in the Netherlands.

Once, after weeks of walking across the midhills of Nepal to record the songs of the Raute community, he arrived at a settlement only to find the men had gone off hunting and there were only women and children. They pitched their tent and off they went, hunting, leaving the women and children behind.

When Bech returned. Bech remembers that his Nepali was better than the Raute’s, who agreed to sing and dance only if Bech donated a goat and become a blood brother.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.

A Step Away from Paradise, just out from Penguin India, tells a true story of what is usually confined to the realm of fiction: a journey to a Land of Immortality.

It was autumn 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to end the world as we knew it. And in the shadows of Kanchenjunga in Nepal a visionary lama was leading over 300 followers to find a hidden land of immortality, a place of refuge and plenty that Tibetan tradition dating back to at least the 12th century declared could only be opened at the time of the most dire need, when catastrophe racked the earth and there was nowhere else to run. The lama’s name was Tulshuk Lingpa.

The hidden land was called Beyul Demoshong, and it was ensconced below Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.

The Bech Collection is a unique ethnomusical documentation and represents the historical continuum of Nepali folk music before modern influences altered it.

Satya Mohan Joshi, who also documented Nepali music from as far back as the 1940s, is delighted that the Bech Collection is back in Nepal. “We have to thank Bech for his contribution to the preservation of Nepali musical heritage and sharing it with us,” Joshi told us. Joshi himself travelled across Nepal during World War II, and saw village after village devoid of men who were off fighting in Burma.
or Europe. It was the women who sang songs of sorrow, of sons in faraway wars.

Lochan Rijal, lecturer of ethnomusicology at Kathmandu University, is also grateful to Terence Bech’s effort. “Hats off to everyone who made this possible,” he says, “having Bech’s collection back in Nepal can contribute immensely to future research.”

Rijal says important collections like Bech’s need to be disseminated in the country of origin for its maximum benefit. It will help researchers look at the evolution of culture and music in Nepal, and also benefit students of traditional Nepali music and dance. Folk music is more than just songs, it expresses and captures the culture of the times: a birth in the household, flirtatious duets, the pain of betrayal or of unrequited love, separation and longing, natural calamities. Bech’s collection has music from all over Nepal and will be available to researchers as long as they are not copied or sold. Nepali ethnographers and musicologists owe Terence Bech a depth of gratitude.

Amar Gurung is chief archivist at the Madan Puraskar Pustaklaya (www.madanpuraskar.org)

OFF SAILING: Terence Bech traversed 15,000 km across Nepal on foot in the 1960s recording folk music and dance, like this one of the Raute community (left). He later climbed K2, and sailed through Patagonia (below). Bech’s music collection has now returned to Nepal.

Listen to two sample recording from Doli and Jumla from the Terence Bech collection
No-men

Naya Patrika, 5 December

Government secretaries have accused the ministers of trying to make them ‘yes-men’ and use them for illegal operations. In a meeting held at the office of Chief Secretary Madhav Prasad Ghimire, 40 secretaries complained against the high-handedness of ministers. The officials alleged that they have not been able to work due to unnecessary interference by ministers and declared that they will not tolerate illegal activities of their bosses. Chief Secretary Ghimire instructed secretaries not to succumb to pressure from ministers. “If any problems arise, contact us at the PMO,” he said during the meeting.

Generally, important decisions pertaining to the ministry are first approved by the secretary after due process and then presented in front of the cabinet. But ministers have been bypassing the official channel and pressurising secretaries to sign the documents without proper evaluation. Lately, there have been several politically motivated transfers by the government, which has destabilised the bureaucracy and built resentment among civil servants. Acting on the demand of the secretaries, Chief Secretary Pokharel issued a halt on all transfer orders except those of first class officers approved by the cabinet.

Decentralising corruption

Kantipur, December 3

Local administrations have become a hotbed of corruption and are being held hostage by the all-party mechanism. Local representatives of the three parties control the planning, budget allocation and financial operation at the village, district and municipal levels. In the absence of local elections, which were last held in 1999, there is a complete lack of accountability.

Instead of consulting people, plans are dictated by the parties which distribute the projects among one another and share the benefits. Last year in Lalitpur more than 100 urban planning projects were divided among the three main parties. Local Development Minister, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi is not happy with the workings of the all-party mechanism and agrees: “It has done more harm than good.”

In Bhairawa, local leaders have violated existing laws and regulations while fixing tax rates for land sales. Last year, Rs 1.5 million was distributed in Bhairawaha among parties, their sister organisations and NGOs of questionable reputation. In Dhulikhel, the UML’s Birendra Shahi has openly admitted to pocketing projects up to Rs 20 million. Funds allocated for development projects are mostly hijacked and embezzled by corrupt politicians. “We had hoped local bodies would help devolve power but all the families nor the state has any answers,” Pushpa Kumar’s wife Bhakti Kumar laments. “What do I say to my children? During the festivals they see other children playing with their father. How do I console them?”

Where are they?

Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 December

RAMECHHAP: Roshan Giri was six years old in 2003 when his father Pushpa Kumar Giri was abducted by the state. Roshan has a fading memory about his father and still hopes that he will return.

Thirteen year old Anup Tiwari does not recall his father’s face. Dandu Tiwari joined the Maoists and went underground before Anup was born. He used to visit them sometimes in the dark hours before he was arrested in February 1999 by the police in Lalitpur. He has not been seen since.

Although the family has lost hope of seeing him alive, they still want to know what happened to him. Many families in Ramechhap district have similar stories to tell. The grown-up children ask questions about their parents, but neither the families nor the state has any answers.

Pushpa Kumar’s wife Bhakti Kumari laments: “Do I say to my children? During the festivals they see other children playing with their father. How do I console them?” During the conflict, 25 people in this district went missing leaving 38 children below the age of 18, who still wait for their return.

Lost labour

Nepal, 4 December

Every year 450,000 workers enter Nepal’s labour force out of which 100,000 are skilled. But political instability and protracted transition has led to mass exodus of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Small businesses such as tailoring, floriculture and hair salons have been affected by shortage of manpower, but the agriculture industry, which makes up 35 per cent of Nepal’s GDP and the manufacturing sector suffer from labour shortage during the harvest season. Expensive labour is robbing small farmers of their profit.

More than 1,500 Nepali workers migrate to work every day. Last year alone, 354,000 youth migrated abroad for work. The minimum monthly wage in Nepal is Rs 6,200 with a minimum daily wage of Rs 230. However, youth who show an aversion to physical labour at home are more than willing to undertake dangerous tasks in foreign countries to earn few thousand rupees more. The labour exodus in Nepal is not only about the difference in pay scales, the lack of jobs here is the main reasons why are fleeing the country in large numbers. In the past few years, political interference by party-backed labour unions has shut down several industries. Power cuts and high banking interest rates have increased production cost, reducing the ability of industries to pay proper wages or generate jobs.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Jhalanath Khanal and I are among few good leaders left in the country.”

Mustal Vice chairman Mohan Baidya quoted in Kantipur, 5 December.
101 states?
Budhabar, 7 December

The State Restructuring Committee of the CA had proposed a confederation of 14 states based on ethnicity, but in the first meeting of the Commission members were unanimously against it. They felt ethnicity should not be the basis for state restructuring. The SRC members were left speechless after member Sarbanj Khadka pointed to the dangers of ethnicity-based federal units. “We will have to make 101 states in the country for 101 ethnic groups,” he reportedly said, “you can’t deny one group the right to state because it has fewer people, and give another the same because it has more people.”

The members also agree that carving out 14 states would not be viable, and they felt more comfortable with a 10-province model based on geography, economic status and identity. Another member of the Commission said: “Ideally Nepal would do best with seven states. If that’s not possible, we will at least try to work out a nine state plan.”

Tipping point
Editorial in Himal Khabarpatrika, 15 December

Nepal’s political transition is at its tipping point. Domestic and external forces are doing all they can to carve out their influence in the new constitution. The Hindu nationalists recently held a conference in Gorakhpur, the Janjati caucus have dared to challenge traditional parliamentary practice by over-riding the party whip. Nepali society is engulfed in a fascinating debate on ethnic, linguistic, regional and gender identities along with political dialogue on rights, democracy and pluralism. International forces with various levels of interest in Nepal have joined the debate as well. The future of the country depends on how successfully we manage to find a compromise to balance all these interest groups.

Of late, attempts are being made to pit the political parties against their Janjati, Madhesi and Dalit constituencies. There is a concerted challenge against the political system of the country in the name of ethnic and regional agendas. While there is a need to reduce the trust deficit between the ruling class and traditionally marginalised ethnic and caste groups, it can never be the rationale to impose the concern of a particular group at the cost of the democratic order. The popular movements of Madhes, Janjatis and the Dalits was about rights and identity, not for ethnic or regional hegemony.
Jewelers of the world, unite

Finally, Transparency International has recognised the capacity of our kleptocratic rulers to loot and plunder at will by upgrading us to 44th from the bottom as the world’s most corrupt country. Now, there is nowhere to go but down. Luckily for us, TI’s rankings are a bit outdated and based on the corruption situation in Nepal last year. Since then, and especially in the last 100 days, we have induced many more oligarchs into govt. The Ass would hazard a guess that we have by now overtaken Afghanistan in the race to the bottom, and if this M’badde-M’dhesi coalition continues for much longer we may finally have the distinction of ranking corruptest in Asia. Bottoms up!

We’re not just talking about measly bribes anymore. It’s now a eat-all-you-can buffet from the national coffers. For the past year or so, more than 3,000 ladakus were missing from the cantonments, but the Baddies were still giving themselves allowances for the full 19,608 former fighters, filling the party war chest with billions in tax payer’s money. Now it finally becomes clear why Comrade Awestruck was boasting in the Shaktikhor Tape that he tricked the UN and everyone into thinking that there were 35,000 ex-fighters “when we all know we only have 4,000”. Ha ha ha! And he has been laughing all the way to the bank ever since. The Baddies have also taught the eh-Maleys well. The Self-Employment Scheme has reportedly been doling out billions of roops to UML cronies in lieu of fake jobs creation. The reason for this week’s riots by the eh-Maley youth wing, YAWN, was to prevent the Baddies from getting their hands back into the Self-Employment honeypot. And when the arson didn’t work, YAWN declared a band on Monday. Had it not been for a prompt reminder from the Americans through Facebook that bund organisers could kiss their chances of getting US visas goodbye, the arses would probably have indulged in more arson. This was such an effective demonstration of the deterrence value of the threat of visa revocation that the Americans promptly lifted the security advisory for nationals visiting Nepal.

Which probably means Patan’s jewelry sows will have to pause a bit next time they apply for a visa when they come to the question in the forms that go ‘Are you or have you ever been involved in enforcing a Nepal or Upatyaka Bund?’ Tick one:

Yes, I was the ringleader
Yes, I smashed the windscreens of four cars
Yes, but I will never do it again, cross my heart.’

I get the feeling office bearers of the Lalitpur Chamber of Commerce and Patan’s jewelry merchants (Motto: ‘Jewelers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your gold chains!’) will be lying low and will not be going on warpath anytime soon. Is this why the diamond merchants and goldsmiths have decided to sponsor traffic stands at all major intersections in the capital? And, speaking of precious stones, where did PKD get that fat 24 carat diamond ring he was sporting the other day?