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BIKRAM RAI

LOCKED HORNS

Nepali politics is getting to look like this traditional annual Maghe Sakranti bull fight in Nuwakot on 15 January (left).

Cynics say a country gets the leaders it deserves, and politics is a spectator sport. In addition to crushing shortages of fuel, power and food Nepalis also have to come to terms with an establishment made up of convicted murderers, kidnappers, war criminals, passport fakers, and ministers who sanction only "pre-paid" transfers and appointments. The hopelessness is turning to apathy, and even the prime minister has had enough and has taken a few days off in Dhulikhel.

The Supreme Court ruling against any more extensions of the Constituent Assembly after 31 May should have imparted a sense of urgency to politicians and lawmakers, but, alas, no. Public opinion polls show growing disillusionment with the rulers, most people don't care about whether Nepal is federal or secular, whether we have a directly elected president or not. They want jobs, security, health and education. Politicians who can take the bull by the horns to prove they can deliver have a chance in the next elections. 

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Tipping point

57% of Nepalis are undecided who they will vote for

By the Way p3
by Anurag Acharya

Using identity for divisive politics is short-sighted and self-destructive

Bio-diesel pioneer p4

Going organic in Kavre p11



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TIPPING POINT

The mystery of why some populations rise up to spontaneously protest, while others don't is the subject of academic research at universities around the world. There are several PhDs waiting to be done about the high pain threshold of Nepalis. How long does a society endure sustained and chronic hardships until it breaks? What is Nepal's tipping point?

We mutter and shrug: no diesel, no petrol, no gas, no electricity, no cash, no jobs, no passports, no problem. There is little hope of things getting better anytime soon, and the hopelessness is turning to apathy.

Cynics say we have the leadership we deserve. As long as the people tolerate an establishment made up of murderers and kidnappers, war criminals and passport fakers, we don't deserve any better. In any other country a motorcyclist who has waited four hours in the cold rain for petrol, watched government vehicles jumping the queue, and then finds the fuel has run out when he gets to the pump, would run amok and start a riot. Even the Baidya faction of the Maoists only threatens an urban uprising, it never actually seem to want to do it even though there is plenty of reason for people to rise up.

Some theorists have speculated on why this is so: the legendary capacity of Nepalis to tolerate hardship and suffering, our society's self-centeredness, we wait for protests to be put together by organised groups or parties, we have come to expect nothing from governments, and are used to making the best of a bad situation. Whatever the reason, successive rulers of Nepal have understood this psycho-social trait, and exploited it ruthlessly.

This is also why elected representatives of the people, the government and civil service are so unresponsive to the people's needs. They habitually ignore public opinion

Forming a government of national unity may be just the right opportunity to bring in clean technocrats

because their legitimacy comes from manipulating the system, not from performance or delivery. Elections are only partly fair and hardly free, so crooks get elected over and over again.

Public opinion polls conducted by Himalmedia and others in the past year show growing disillusionment with the political establishment and elected representatives. Never has the gap between the people's needs (inflation, health, education, jobs) and the obsession of the rulers (power, money) been as wide as it is now.

The Himalmedia poll of May 2011 corresponds almost exactly with

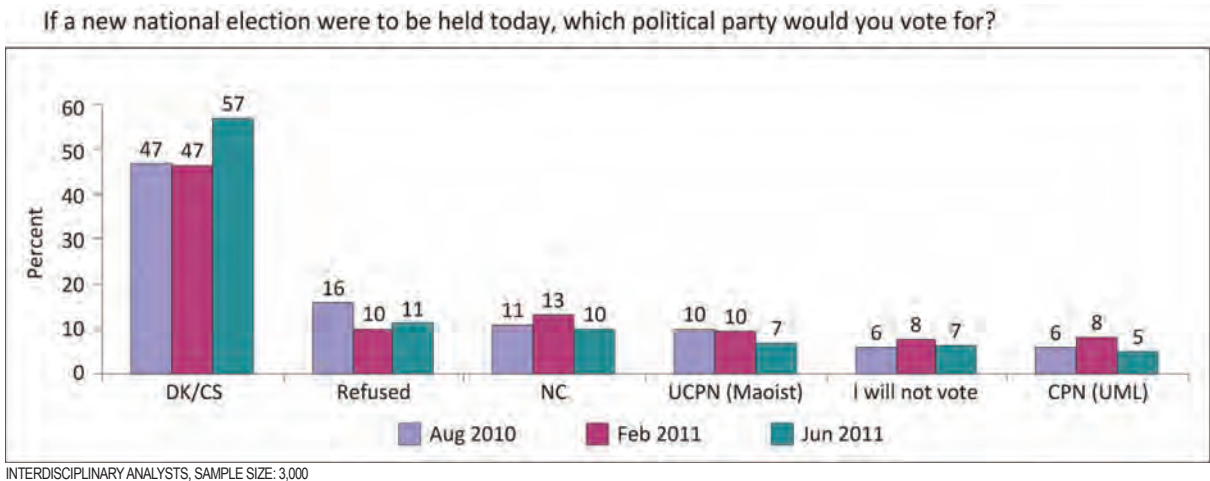
the results of the latest cycle of polls conducted by Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA), the results of which were published recently. In both polls, most respondents didn't seem to be bothered about federalism, secularism, or even that Nepal is now a republic. There is a backlash against the politicisation of ethnicity, and the proportion of people who said they'd like to be identified as Nepali only grew from 58 per cent in 2010 to 71 per cent last year. Both polls showed the people are fed up with politicians and want new elections.

Politicians should sit up and take notice. Asked about who they will vote for in the next election, the IDA poll shows 57 per cent of the respondents were undecided. Of those with preferences, the IDA and Himalmedia polls both put the NC ahead of the Maoists, with the UML trailing. The next elections (whenever that happens) is about winning the hearts and minds of the 57 per cent who are undecided. If conducted fairly, leaders with better performance and integrity will win.

We have seen politicians in the past who have made a big difference in a small time in office. Local council leaders in the 1990s were re-elected based on performance. It would be too much to expect a cabinet made up of mostly hoodlums to even understand this, which is why the prime minister must show statesmanship and throw out the rotten eggs in his government before his own image is irreversibly tarnished.

Forming a government of national unity may be just the right opportunity to bring in clean technocrats. Address the shortages and there will be no shortage of votes.

For IDA Opinion Poll Report: info@ida.com.np



nepalitimes.com
No surprises, # 553

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

WEN IN KATHMANDU

I think the Chinese are fearful of Nepal falling into the hands of another powerful economy down south which was why Premier Wen made a hasty and brief transit-visit ('Wen in Kathmandu', www.nepalitimes.com). China's promise to build highways and finance development projects will undoubtedly benefit Nepal in the short-term. But how long will we keep begging for help in return of cracking down on Tibetan refugees?

Dravin Bahadur Shrestha

TRUTHS

I read two pieces on Manbir Sunar's murder: first, the news that Sunar was beaten to death for touching the fireplace and then the INSEC investigation which stated that he was not beaten to death for that cause ('Truths, half truths and damn lies', Rubeena Mahato, #587). Nepal's fourth estate is as irresponsible as everyone else in the country. The media believes its responsibility ends once journalists have reported what they 'saw' or 'heard'. And it will never own up to its mistakes or publish corrections on earlier stories.

N Giri

- Sunar's murder is not an isolated case as failure to cross-check facts has been going on for years. But it seems Rubeena Mahato and other journalists are finally realising this fact. Remember the lies and rumours that the media spread 10 years ago about the royal massacre? Has anyone from the media ever



apologised for wrongly accusing the innocent for the murders even long after the truth is out in the open?

SN

- The media and political leaders need to stop appeasing civil society activists and presenting their views as representative of all Nepalis. These so called analysts have deep ties with parties and INGOs and have hidden agendas. But poor Nepalis are misled and hoodwinked all the time.

Rajaram Singh

- I have heard rumours about INSEC's close ties with political parties. Unless the INSEC report has been verified by talking to locals, it cannot be called credible either and without verification, Mahato's story would also be a 'damn lie'.

Nabin Raj

NEW NEPAL

Instead of promoting a governance system that corresponds with his personal prejudices, it would be better if Anurag Acharya wrote columns that are based on real arguments and critical analysis ('New Nepal's old school', #587). So what if he doesn't like the 'old' does it mean we should we do away with our democratic system too, because it is so 1990? I do not understand

why Nepalis are suddenly fixated on a directly-elected executive head. Hitler, Suharto, Hugo Chavez, Rajapakse, Mugabe were all executive heads who were elected by the people. Do we want a similar 'leader' in Nepal and do we want to waste another 20-30 years waiting for our very own 'Nepali Spring'?

Bibek

- The term 'new Nepal' is now a popular word in our lexicon, but what does it mean precisely? Are we talking about some consumer brand here or a country which embodies a certain geography, history, people, heritage and identity? Do we want a new territory, wipe out our history, disown our heritage and identity and replace our people? The past, present and future of a country are always a continuum: we

can improve, change or add some elements but we cannot replace it with something entirely 'new'. Or is 'new Nepal' a euphemism for the 'creation through destruction' doctrine followed by people like Bhattarai and Dahal? Like a previous reader said, if we think everything belonging to the 1990s (and all of Nepal's history as some would want us to believe) was wrong and old, then for the sake of a 'new Nepal' we should do away with democracy too.

Ushaft

- I don't understand what all this fuss is about? Newspapers are private corporations who will publish stories that will attract advertisers and bring in maximum revenue. They are not obliged to publish the truth. They run a business and if people blindly believe what the media tells them then it is their problem. As the saying goes: "check your ears before running after the crow."

Jange

OUTER RING ROAD

The Ass may have meant it as tongue-in-cheek but the Outer Ring Road proposal was planned to preserve the environment of the valley with the concept of regulating urban sprawl and making it less octopus-like. But some communal elements are against it as they feel that it will change the demography of the valley against the Newar population. Kathmandu as the power centre of the country will grow at an unprecedented way in any case. The Outer Ring Road for Kathmandu is a must.

DG

DEVELOPMENT

After a long time, I got to read

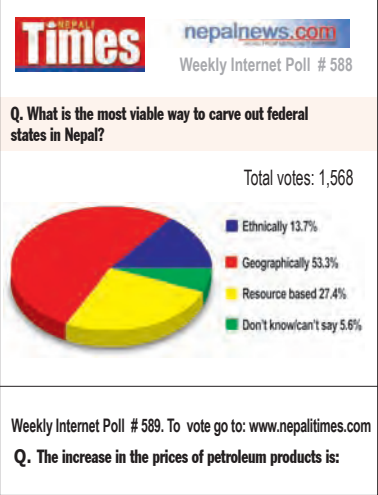
something positive about Nepal ('Development without government', Anurag Acharya, #587). Bravo Mr. Jagadish Ghimire, your dedication and service to the country makes me proud to be a Nepali. In Nepal, the government is the problem and not a solution and I think all of us would benefit if the government empowered the people and let them do all the work.

Suman Shrestha

FOUNDATION

Kudos to Bonnie Ellison ('Foundation for the future', Brittany Searle, #587)! I truly admire her efforts to introduce green architecture and use solar power to light the building. No more dark nights for the children and what a great educational tool! Hope, our policy-makers learn from Ama Ghar. What we need in Nepal today is more positive community-led activities in place of empty promises and rhetoric

Anonymous



Caucus chaos

A political caucus is not a tool for political blackmailing



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

When the first sitting of the CA declared Nepal a secular republic on 28 May 2008, it had vowed to draft a constitution to ensure an inclusive state by May 2010. We are nearing two years of the extended period, and the Supreme Court has ruled there will be no more extensions after 28 May.

The newly formed State Restructuring Committee has been given the task of proposing a viable federal structure, but its mandate is being dictated by a caucus of CA members from indigenous groups who all want their ethnic fiefdoms.

Recent public opinion polls by this newspapers and others have shown that a majority of respondents from indigenous communities themselves have misgivings about carving out provinces along ethnic lines. A poll in June 2011 by Interdisciplinary Analysts shows that the number of people who want to define their identity as 'Nepali' first and their ethnicity second has risen to 71 per cent.

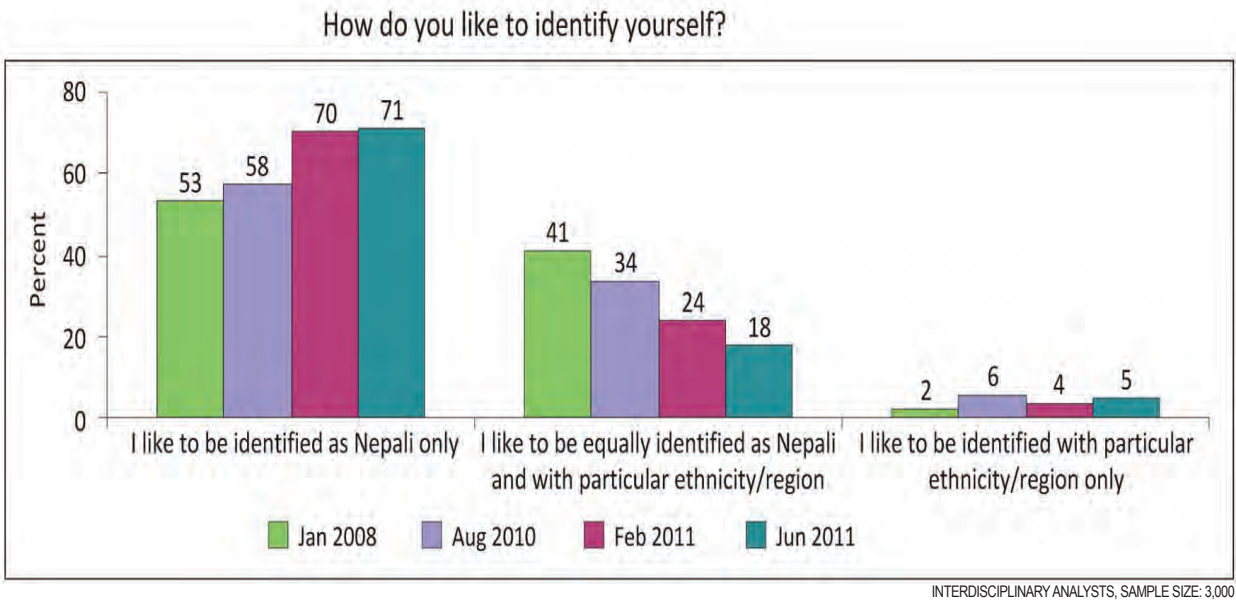
We are trying to correct past mistakes by making an even bigger blunder on state restructuring. The way to address marginalisation and discrimination is by inclusion not by whipping up ethnic exculsion. We protect our national unity by recognising our diversity, not by fragmenting an already fractious state. By taking the path of ethnically demarcated federalism we will reinforce the same divisions in society that we have fought so hard against. Some super intellectuals see ethnic federalism as a viable and scientific move towards inclusion, but it is a case of

an overdose of the wrong medicine. Looking at the historical marginalisation in Nepal only through the prism of caste and ethnicity is a failure of imagination. There are other forms of exploitation, including the plight of the religious minorities, dalits and women who are not separate identities but disempowered sections within all ethnic groups.

We don't have to go too far to see the perils of a culturally divided society. After India's independence in 1947, the country adopted a linguistic federal structure taking into account demography of language. Sixty years later, states have failed to protect minorities within their territories. The slaughtering of Muslims in Gujarat, dalits in Orissa and the prosecution of Biharis in Maharastra by the 'maraathi maanus' (a crony title given to invoke a linguistic identity) are only a few examples of what linguistic federalism has done to India.

The purpose of having a political caucus is to ensure effective bargaining, it is not a tool for political blackmailing. The indigenous caucus in Nepal's CA, generously supported by well-meaning but naïve donor groups, is using the cross platform to hold the nation hostage to irrational demands. Even more worrying is that these pressure groups are now out of control of parties, the organized elected entities supposed to find political solutions to the country's problems.

Yes, particular sections of Nepali society prospered more than others in the past due to their access to political centers of power, education and opportunities. But, geographical remoteness of the country coupled with feudal governance that sustained illiteracy and socio-economic backwardness are the main reasons why Janajatis, Dalits, Chettris and even Brahmins, in the remote areas of the country



were historically wronged.

Affirmative action policies are needed for the underprivileged, but such policies have to be forward looking and embrace inclusive identity, not create new, multiple barriers in society.

It is no more just the Maoists, who originally brought in the

ethnic debate as a mobilisation tactic during the years of war, the entire political landscape has been dominated by issues of ethnicity and identity.

In the last few years, the identity debate made people more aware, they have shed the traditional fatalistic mindset and started asserting

themselves. To see women, Dalits, Madhesis and indigenous communities celebrate their diversity and help in nation building is an achievement of the 2006 movement. But using identity politics to drive a wedge in society for divisive politics is short-sighted and self-destructive. 🇳🇵

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Doughnuts to diesel

As the fuel crunch hits, bio-diesel from waste cooking oil shows the way

DEWAN RAI

While other vehicle owners struggle to find a spot on the queue for petrol at gas stations, Vishwa Pratap Maskey drives his van past crowds. The shortage doesn't affect him.

No, Maskey's van is not battery powered. He is one of the few Nepalis who actually runs a vehicle on bio-diesel made from plants.

Maskey had bought a van to transport goods for department stores in Jawalakhel to his café in Boudha, but after watching a program on Discovery Channel which showed McDonalds using waste oil to operate its delivery

vehicles, Maskey was inspired to experiment with his van.

He imported an oil filter from China for Rs100,000 and used soybeans that were unfit for human consumption because of long storage to make his own bio-diesel. It worked, so he turned to experimenting with waste oil from frying doughnuts and french fries in his restaurant in Boudha to produce bio-diesel to fuel his car.

"It was a big risk. I had to invest a large amount for the oil-filter machine and there was no guarantee that I would succeed," recalls Maskey, "but it went well, bio-diesel has saved me millions and I no longer have to worry about frequent fuel shortages."

Maskey's G-Café produces up to 40 litres of waste oil every day and this is enough to run the generator to provide electricity to his restaurant during power cuts.

Maskey's yellow van carries a 'this vehicle runs on biodiesel' sign and has accumulated more than 20,000 km on the roads of Kathmandu till now.

He had hoped that after seeing his van, more Nepalis would want to also switch to bio-diesel, but Maskey is disappointed that there are few takers. "A policeman tried to confiscate my vehicle once,

because it ran on fuel that he had never heard of and thought was illegal," Maskey recalls, laughing.

Maskey says the type of bio-fuel he produces is best for NAE, DI and TDI engines for which he mixes 40 per cent diesel with 60 per cent bio-diesel. A four-cylinder 2 litre engine can run up to 10 km per litre. "If there was a centre where we could collect waste oil from hotels and restaurants throughout the valley, this could turn into a commercially viable venture and even heavy vehicles could start using biodiesel," he says.

Currently 60 per cent of the country's budget is spent on importing oil from India and Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) finds itself on the brink of bankruptcy. Adulteration and leakage of fuel is rampant and increased power cuts have heightened Nepali's dependence on oil products. Although the government has made some effort to promote bio-fuel since the 1990s, Nepal still relies entirely on NOC.

Says Maskey: "Bio-fuel is not just a fashion statement for ecologists, it makes economic sense too. It is a necessity when fossil diesel is expensive or unavailable." ■



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Conflicts of disinterest

In government and private sector, we confuse governance with management



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest is something our politicians and businessmen find hard to practice. On the other side, when we, as consumers, come across instances of conflict of interest, in government or in the private sector, we don't make a fuss as persistently as we should.

Keeping quiet on small matters thus emboldens leaders to take more liberties to do what they wish, and their cumulative actions over time lead to a failure of governance – both in the political and the business sphere.

How then should we understand the constituencies of conflicts of interest?

Mistaking governance for management: in Nepal, this is the most common form of governance abuse. The press reports it, but nothing happens because we confuse governance with management.

No sooner a new minister comes on board than he starts transferring civil servants. Like Home Minister Bijaya Kumar Gachadar. Some even publicly promise not to transfer bureaucrats, only to break their own promise to fill the top ministerial positions with cronies.

Nobody tells the minister that his task is not to manage the ministry. Nor is it to meddle with its day-to-day affairs. His task is to govern the ministry so that it strives to meet the objectives set in various national plans and policy documents which set the directions for development for several years. But plans and policies be damned when the minister thinks that he can make impulsive changes.

Private sector companies are not immune from this disease of mistaking governance for management. Look at any feuding board at a bank.



The nub of the problem often boils down to board members' imagining themselves as super-managers, and undermining the importance

of salaried professional staff to interfere into the daily activities of the bank. Micro-managed institutions are rarely well-governed.

Treating institution as personal fiefdom: no minister thinks of himself as the steward of public trust about his ministry. Given the state of Nepali politics, wherein the same incompetent politician gets elected and selected no matter how many times elections are held, the minister does not fear voter backlash. He fears others from his party usurping power from his hands.

He thus has little incentive to do things that his voters appreciate. Instead he uses his stint to amass a war-chest which can be used to win the next election, whenever that will be. He thus treats the ministry as his personal piggy-bank, from which he will extract as much money as possible.

Private companies fare no better, though, in the banking sector, Nepal Rastra Bank's regulations are making it harder for bank boards to treat their institutions as extensions of their personal offices. Still, the tales of board members abusing their institutions' assets for their personal benefits are boringly numerous.

What, then, is the antidote? Constant vigilance and increased competition. Increasing civil society's vigilance in the form of investigative press reports, lawsuits and shareholder activism keep the errant politicians and the businessmen on their toes. To a large extent, it is already happening in the political sphere: voters know that most politicians they elected in April 2008 to draft the constitution have let them down. But as of now, they do not have credibly democratic alternatives to those that they elected.

With regard to governance of private sector companies, regulations can only go so far, and there have been cases of regulators held captive by the interests of the entities under regulation. Making it easier to both open up companies and allow foreign companies to set up offices in Nepal is likely to lead to greater competition, which, in turn, is likely to reduce conflict of interest issues in Nepali companies.

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Stepping up

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The face off

Sherpa Adventure Outlet (SAO) the only authorised dealer of The North Face in Nepal has been running a promotional campaign, The Face of The North Face since November 2011. The winner of this month's contest, Tashi Wangyal Ghale won a Denali Jacket from The North Face. This campaign aims to educate consumers about genuine North Face products.

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Everyone makes ‘em, most people break ‘em, others just fake ‘em. This riddle has limited validity, because few look back to take stock after the novelty of the new year wears off. Giving up vices and embracing virtues is all that new year resolutions are about; most of us fail epically.

But we’d be forgiven for believing the more successful among us actually stick to their 12-month plans, being made of somewhat sterner stuff. So imagine, if you will, the end-of-year celebrations at Parisdanda. Under the avuncular visages of past despots, our dear leaders are clinking whisky glasses between mouthfuls of succulent sekuwa, toasting each other with rare abandon amidst a haze of smoke. Then Dahal pops the question:

Ani, what are your resolutions for this year, Baidya-ji?
Baidya (with a cheeky grin): Um...give up violence?
(Uproarious laughter, loudest from the



Moving on

Resolve to have your cake and eat it too in slightly delayed new year resolutions

hard-drinks coterie, including Dahal.)
Dahal (giggling): Any others?
Baidya (more soberly):
1. Oppose any kind of accomodation with capitalist lackeys and reactionaries.
2. Assume mantle of revolutionary leader.
3. Disrupt elections.
4. Seize absolute power!

(Baburam Bhattarai and the soft-drinks coterie look nervous, Dahal discomfited. But compelled by the historical inevitability of New Year resolutions, he turns to BB, beaming)
Baburam-ji?
BB (metronomically):

1. Complete army integration, decide on model for federalism, promulgate constitution.
2. Assume mantle of can-do leader. (raises his voice to be heard above the heckling)
3. Win by a landslide in elections.
4. Seize absolute power!

(He swigs his Fanta violently. There is silence, then cheers. Baidya looks miffed, and demands of Dahal)
And you, Prachanda ji? What do you resolve?
Dahal (thoughtfully): I propose a fusion resolution.

1. Oppose any kind of accommodation, while toadying to capitalist lackeys, reactionaries, and progressives.
2. Retain mantle of revolutionary, can-do leader.
3. Win by a landslide in disrupted elections.
4. Seize absolute power!
(Cheers, jeers, and much clinking of glasses follows, late into the night.)

We must leave our jolly comrades for now, but consider this. How would you manage if each of your resolutions was challenged by equally powerful counter-resolutions, or simply undermined by one of the seven deadly sins? Say you want to give up smoking. But come Friday night you can’t resist puffing in the cancer because the drag is irresistible, goes so well with those equally forbidden gulps of whisky and crunches of sukuti, and everybody else is doing it so why can’t you?

Of course, private resolutions like avoiding cancer or heart disease are right for you, it’s the execution that’s troublesome. More complex decisions – on politics, economy, career, society – prove to be proper dilemmas. In these cases, crowd-pleasing fusion à la Dahal may work to your advantage.

As the incremental progress of our much-maligned peace process suggests, the middle road may be the one most likely to get you where you’re going. So following the example of our leaders, be prepared to compromise – at least a little – on those noble intentions. That way you may achieve some part of them rather than fail completely, and move forward rather than round and round in circles, ending where you started at the beginning of each new year. 🇳🇵

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RED CARD CHAMPIONS

Domestic league players are spending more time serving suspensions than on the field

SANTA GAHA MAGAR

After a winning year and a boost in regional rankings for the national team, Nepali fans were looking forward to more breathtaking football action in 2012. But those hopes were dashed.

Just two days into the new year Nepali football turned into a footbrawl. Several players were suspended or banned for physically assaulting opponents and referees, and disobeying match officials in the on-going A and B division league matches.

The National A Division League match between Manang Marsyangdi and New Road Team (NRT) on 2 January got increasingly hostile as the game entered injury time with NRT leading by one goal. Both teams resorted to fist fights soon after Manang's Nirajan Khadka deliberately pushed NRT's Rajan Adhikari. Sachin Amatya issued red cards to five players, but the brawl continued and riot police had to be called in.

Khadka was lucky to get away with just a yellow card. But due to the severity of the offence, Vijay Gurung and Sujal Shrestha from Manang and Laxman Ruchal, Asimjung Karki and Raghu Prajapati from NRT were

handed a three-match ban.

Such violence and indiscipline has tarnished the reputation of clubs and has hurt them because of the absence of their best players. Since Pokhara, NRT has not won a single game. On 4 January, it lost against a new team, Mitramilan, and again to Police Club on 6 January and Himalayan Sherpa. Previous title holder and tournament favourite Manang Marsyangdi, has also fared poorly and has slid down the point tables.

In a similar incident on 25 December, players of Gyan Bhairab Youth Club manhandled referee Sudish Pandey during the Martyr's Memorial B-Division League at the Police football ground in Maharajgunj. Sudeep Giri was suspended for two years while his teammates Sunil Bhandari, Bharat Gurung, Kiran Subba Yokso, Yogbahadur Gurung, Kuldip Karki and Deepak Karki received one year suspensions. For the first time in Nepal's football history a Division B club was demoted and asked to pay Rs 75,000 penalty. Coach Amik KC, Team Manager Kishor Ranjit and officials Niraj Thapa and Bishwas Thapa will also face charges.

Nepal's U-16 team seems to be quickly picking up the bad habits of their seniors. During a SAFF U-16

Championship match against Bangladesh on 4 January, Rangrihang Rai pushed Mohammed Sawir into the ground after the Bangladeshi player had tackled Vishwas Shrestha. Although referee Ahmed Aslam from Maldives was hesitant to issue a red card to Rai in front of a full capacity home crowd, the fans showed their disapproval by throwing water bottles at the players.

ANFA Football Development Director, Sanjeev Mishra sees a need for strict regulations: "When there are no serious repercussions it is easy for players to attack opponents and match officials." Although the career of many big named players are on the line, the fans and ANFA are the biggest losers.

Hari Khadka one of the most effective Nepali strikers, reminds players that in order to succeed on the field, they must learn to control their aggression and respect their opponents: "Football is a naturally aggressive game and the ability to control aggression is the most important skill for any player."

nepalitimes.com
Bend it like Sagar, #585

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रङ र जात पनि हुँदैन । काम गरेर खान लजाउनु पनि हुँदैन । चोरेर, ढाँटेर,
छलेर, लुटेर खान पो लजाउनुपर्छ । जो जहाँ रहेर जुन काम गर्छ ऊ त्यसैमा
रमाउनुपर्छ गौरव गर्नुपर्छ र समर्पित भएर गर्नुपर्छ । काम नै शक्ति हो, भक्ति
हो र मुक्ति हो । कामको इज्जत गरौं, पसिनाको सम्मान गरौं ।

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EVENTS



Last Thursdays, US ambassador to Nepal Scott H. DeLisi talks about 'Role of Development for Economic Growth in Nepal' and his experiences of working in developing countries. *26 January, 5pm to 7pm, DECC Hall, United World Trade Centre, Tripureshwar*



Sunday Cinema, New Nepali Cinema presents the screening of Dasdhunga, a movie about the mystery behind the death of UML party members Madan Bhandari and Jivanath Aasrit. *Rs 100 and Rs 50 (for students), 21 January, 4pm to 7pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka*



Pranayama Power Yoga, Pranayama brings a month-long yoga session for a healthy start to the new year. *Rs 350 per class, starting from 2 January, 7am to 8pm, 1905, Kantipath, info@pranayama-yoga.com*



New Wangden Carpets and Furniture Exhibition, check out the Wangden Carpet Collection by Rupert Smith or browse through Nepali and Tibetan carpets and furniture. *17 December to 30 January, 2pm onwards, Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 4413580*

Queens Fashion Show, celebrate glitz and glamour with food and drinks at this fashion show. *20 January, 5pm onwards, Belly Buster, Lazimpat*

Family Fair, enjoy a fun day out with your little ones complete with magic shows, circus shows and live music. *Rs 150 (for children) and Rs 200 (for adults), 21 January, 12pm onwards, Garden of Dreams, Thamel, 4425340*

Cycle 7: Identity, three photography installations: Navarasa, Ink'd and The Tales of Dirty Feet by talented photographers. 9.30 am to 8pm, 6 January to 15 February, Galleria CUC, Deetya Complex, Maharajgunj

Ultimate Digital Photography Workshop, learn everything about photography. *Fees Rs 3000, 7am to 9.30 am, 15 to 24 January, The Image Park (Opposite of Peanuts), New Road, 9841240341, 9841497639*

MUSIC

Live Night, groove to the live performance of the band Night. *Tickets Rs 200, 21 January, 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm, Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat*

Black History Month, celebrate the spirit and culture of African Americans with music and literature events and documentary screenings. *House of Music, Thamel*

Hope Concert, Bethel Fellowship Trust Nepal and Bishram Ministries Nepal present live performances by Divine Connection and Kutumba. *21 January, 3pm to 6.30 pm, St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel, 9841721736, 9808982171*



DINING



Imago Dei, be it casual hangouts or business meetings, Imago Dei is the place for you. *Nag Pokhari*

Sol Delicatessen, a range of gourmet food that will satiate the most refined palates. *10am to 6pm (closed on Mondays), Babar Mahal Revisited, 4216433, Soldelicatessen@gmail.com*



Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, scrumptious panini, sandwiches and more lunch delicacies starting at Rs 199. Manny's also offers a satisfying assembly of a unique continental

cuisine. Open for lunch and dinner and a Tapas Bar for you to unwind and relax. *Jawalakhel Shaligram Complex, 5536919*

Cibo, a sandwich bar at heart, this cafe serves up one of the best sandwiches in town. *Lazimpat*

Cha Cha Café, this Japanese restaurant is popular for its spaghetti and burger steaks. *Thamel*

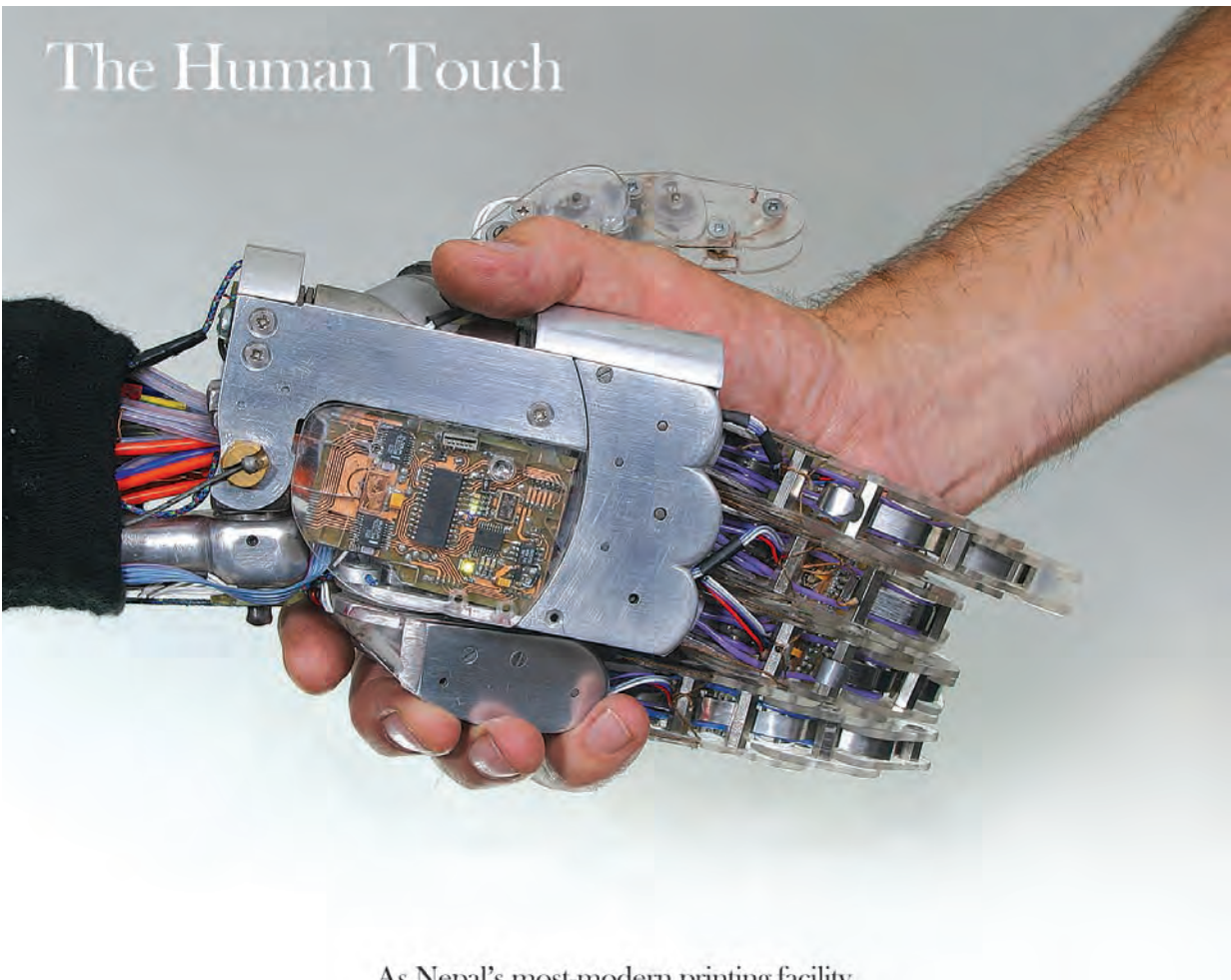


Pumpnickel Bakery, get an early breakfast or brunch with interesting choices of bread and sandwiches. Experiment with its goat cheese or yak cheese sandwiches, or have a sip of coffee in the classy indoor dining area. *Thamel, 7.30am to 7pm, 4259185*



Chikusa, enjoy a cup of freshly ground coffee with syrupy pancakes, waffles and crepes. *Thamel*

Jazz Upstairs, the perfect place to relax with friends, listen to good music and have a plate of the best momos in town. *Lazimpat*



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Artistic emotions

Opening on 22 January, Sunday at 4.30 pm, Emotions in Motion is a collection of paintings by Govinda Prasad Sah that takes viewers on a journey through a spectrum of emotions. Featured at the Siddharta Art Gallery, the exhibition will be inaugurated by John Tucknott, the British Ambassador to Nepal.

Born in the terai region, Sah was interested in various art forms from an early age. He trained under a number of Newari instructors at Kathmandu College of Fine arts and his ambitious work earned him the nicknames 'Lion Heart' and 'Azad'. After graduating from Tribhuvan University, he went on to earn his Masters degree from the Wimbledon College of Art in London. While in the UK he worked under the tutelage of Geraint Evans, a British painter known for his surrealism and imagery that influence much of Sah's style.

In 2000 he introduced his work in a nation-wide exhibition titled *The 21st Century is the Century for Art and Peace*. He held lectures, discussions and workshops with the aim of promoting peace for the coming century.

Sah's dedication to his work sets him apart from other artists. While some of his work has been sponsored by both the British Council in Nepal and the Egyptian Ambassador to Nepal, he was also recently short-listed for the prestigious John Moore's Contemporary Painting Award.

Inspired by Newari art and Varinya Buddhism, Sah's paintings attempt to capture the most complicated notions of eastern philosophy, human nature and life. According to Sah his work has a three dimensional basis and he says what you see isn't quite what you get. "In responding to my paintings I hope that others will also feel these emotions and be moved by them, as well as accepting that they may be beyond our understanding."

The exhibit will remain open until 7 February and entry is free to the public.





Bench Burger, be it fish or steak burgers, Bench Burger offers many types and tastes to satisfy your palate. *Krishnagalli, Patan*



Fire and Ice, home to some of the most delicious pizzas in town. *Thamel, 4250210*

OR2K, one of the few vegetarian restaurants in the Valley, its Middle Eastern platter is delicious and the cocktails are to die for. *Mandala Street, Thamel, 4422097*

Buddha Bar, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. *Thamel, 9851053235*

Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and charming courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for its open sui mai, the cafe also offers other great dishes. *Pulchowk*

Tama, an assortment of traditional delicacies and old classics at an affordable price. *Gairidhara*

Rum Doodle, a hodgepodge of flavors and a must for trekkers and mountaineers. *Thamel*



Dhokaima Cafe, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. *Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113*

GETAWAYS



Amtrip Adventures, be a part of the Amtrip Bungy or Swing Jump Event. *Rs 2700 per person for one day or Rs 4500 per person for an overnight stay, valid until the end of January, Amtrip, Naxal, 4444690, 4444820, www.amtrip.com.np*

Fulbari Resort, enjoy the scenic view as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. *Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days, Pokhara, 4461918, 4462248, resv@fulbari.com.np, sales@fulbari.com.np*

And they're off

The much anticipated Great Himalaya Trail- Climate Smart Celebrity Trek was flagged off from Taplejung in eastern Nepal on Tuesday, and is led by Apa Sherpa who has scaled Mt Everest 21 times.

Apa and his team will travel from Kangchenjunga to Api-Saipal carrying a national flag handed to them by President Ram Baran Yadav at his office on 12 January in Kathmandu. He is accompanied by twice Everest summitteer Dawa Steven Sherpa, Saurav Dhakal and Samir Jung Thapa on the 1,700 km and 120 days trek across 20 districts of Nepal.

The trek has been organised by Himalayan Climate Initiative in coordination with the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, with the support from DFID, British Council, SNV, NTB, TAAN and other Great Himalayan Trail Development Program partners, to draw attention to the impact of climate change in the Himalaya and promote the GHT as a new trekking product.



Dawa Sherpa posted this on Facebook: 'We started walking today. We have a few aches and pains as we adjust to carrying 20 kilo packs on our backs. It's beautiful out here and the people are super friendly. People have been coming up to us on the trail and wishing us well. The local radio stations and press have been very generous to us in spreading the word. Apa Dai truly is a celebrity.'

- To follow the Climate Smart Celebrity Trek on Facebook:**
- HCI Climate Smart Trek
 - www.nepaltimes.com
 - Unleashing Kangchenjunga, #585
 - Pristine region offers new hope to revive trekking in 2012
 - The long march, #541
 - Five months, hundreds of mountains, seventeen hundred kilometres
 - Following the Karnali, #531
 - Nepal's silver lining runs the length of the country

SOMEPLACE ELSE



PICS: MARCO POLLO

Mako's

equally delicate fish eggs are exquisite. Stagehands quickly change the porcelain scenery, and enters Mako san's vegetable tempura battered with her own recipe, perfectly executed. Tender legumes encrusted with a light, flaky coating outdo other versions in the city that are either too doughy or drenched in oil. But without question, the prima donna was the show-stopping nine-piece sashimi at Rs 1400. Flown from Thailand, fresh cuts of raw tuna, mackerel and salmon deliver a sheer delicacy.



Mako's at Dwarika's joins a list of exceptional additions to Kathmandu's table, highly priced, but nonetheless deserving of an encore. 🇳🇵

Marco Pollo

Get thee to Dwarika's in Old Baneshwor, upon entry gravitate left towards the gravel of the Zen-inspired patio



What makes Dwarika's latest edacious undertaking distinct from other Japanese restaurants in Kathmandu is showmanship. Like the *jo-ha-kyu* of Kabuki theatre, Mako's manager Mako

san presents a five-act production in an intimate setting that savors of how the Japanese do fine dining.

In harmony with Dwarika's blend of traditional accents and modern luxuries, Mako's is well-designed and carved from wood: bamboo staves aloft complement a typical *kaidan-tansu* or step-case and walls bedecked in shoji, the traditional wooden lattice work of opaque paper tiles. Rare tapis samples of matrimonial kimonos adorn the interior and call attention to the servers' patterned costumes sewn from loose Japanese textiles.

Jo (Opening). After

complements of a wet towel and a warm cup of green tea so gingerly poured, an amuse-bouche of sautéed aubergine strewn in a soy, ginger, and fish stock reduction serves an auspicious introduction. A cloudy orb of miso, fermented soybeans and barley, sits undisturbed at the bottom of a soup bowl only then to be stirred and sipped and ends the first course.

Ha (Plot and climax). A simple but fresh maki of diced cucumber and avocado, the California Roll has gained popularity even in Japan, securing its entry in the standard Japanese bill of faire. The dainty pinches daubed with



The Help



Must See is a new weekly DVD review column



MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

A standard synopsis of *The Help* might sound terribly boring: a recent college graduate returns to her hometown of Jackson, Mississippi and decides to write a book based on the anecdotes of the black domestic staff that tend to the needs of the uppity white Southern upper-class. A film with such a description could easily be a feel-good, irritatingly candy-like homily on right and wrong, north vs south, race and gender and, of course, differences.

While the film, adapted from a novel by Kathryn Stockett, is made to appeal to a large audience it sidesteps the general pitfalls of crowd-pleasers by managing to delight and shock, therefore resonating in our minds till much after. Here in Nepal, the film is a gentle reminder of the horrors that people can inflict upon each other even in times of peace, women against women, race against race.

This is largely due the excellent dialogue, the humour and sensitivity that runs throughout the story, and the spectacular ensemble cast. We have Emma Stone as Skeeter Phelan, the college graduate intent on making her name as a journalist by recounting the stories of Aibileen Clark (played by the soulful, thoughtful Viola Davis), Minny Jackson (a feisty Octavia Spencer), and her own nanny Constantine Jefferson (acted with warmth and grace by Cicely Tyson) among others.

Skeeter could so easily have been a paradigm of the annoying Tintin-like journalist focused only on getting "the

story" but her humour and her sass make her much much more. A tad awkward, unfortunately a bit too brainy, and supposedly not very pretty (impossible with a face like Emma Stone's) Skeeter learns to give as good as she gets from her impossibly catty debutante peer group as she slowly starts to realize that being different, and independent, in the deep South in the 1960s also means one has to be that much braver to stand up for one's beliefs. At that time, being black and doing the wrong thing could still get you lynched, being white and standing up for the civil rights movement could get you shot.

It is impossible to describe here all the wonderful stories and characters within this rich and delightful film. Its power lies in its fearless portrayal of the horrors and indignities that these stoic black women suffered as they raised the children of white families (most of whom go on to become horrid replicas of their parents), and its ability to bring to life an assortment of fully rounded characters that braved their way through such malice and indignities, great and small, with humour, with decency and with spirit.

This is a story about the strength of women. However, it does not mean that it is a film only for women. Any good story ought to be able to transcend gender, class and race. "The Help" is such a story. Although it was made in a supposedly post-feminist, post-racial Occidental world, even in the West the memory of racism and the presence of sexism in near and painful enough that it ought to be memorialised still. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer



Pain in the sole



DHANVANTARI

Buddha Basnyat, MD

What on earth is Plantar (sole) Fasciitis (inflammation) and why should we be worried? It is a common problem of pain on the heel pad as shown in the picture. The plantar fascia is a band of tissue that runs from the heel and supports the arch of the foot. A story will help illustrate the problem. Forty-five year old Ram Bahadur was a surgeon in a local hospital who started experiencing pain in his right heel even as he was operating on his patients. He would typically feel better for a short period of time when he soaked his feet in hot water. The pain was worse in the morning after he woke up and walked around. There was increased pain and tenderness when he pressed his finger on the soft pad of his heel (picture). Other than this bothersome, dull ache in his right heel, he felt completely normal with no other complaints. There was no history of trauma or any

neurological diseases. He took ordinary pain medicines which gave him some relief.

Individuals who spend a significant amount of time on their feet either walking, standing or running may be more predisposed as in the case of the surgeon who spent many hours standing and operating



on patients. Athletes who are constantly pounding their feet on a hard surface are also liable to suffer from plantar fasciitis. Obese people and people above 40 also may suffer from this problem due to the excessive weight bearing and pressure

on the heels for many years. Most experienced clinicians will make the diagnosis without doing any tests just based on the history and the tenderness on the heel on careful examination.

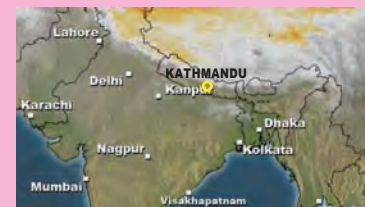
Unfortunately there is no single, effective treatment for plantar fasciitis. Educating patients about their condition can be an integral part of therapy. Athletes with plantar fasciitis may need to modify their activity and opt for relative rest for a temporary period of time. Obese people will need to lose weight. Not walking bare feet and using shoes with good arch support and cushioned heels may help. Massaging and stretching the fascia in the morning, for example, by rolling the foot over a can may be beneficial. Besides taking ordinary pain medicines, using ice on the heel pad after exercise or just soaking the feet in warm

water can provide temporary relief. Some doctors will inject steroids locally into the fascia, but this is more of a drastic measure for pain control. In most instances the pain will improve within a year even without any therapy. 🇳🇵



WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The low pressure area that brought cloud cover and some rain early this week is still sitting over western Nepal, altering the wind patterns so that we are getting cold air streaming in from the western Tibetan plateau. This is the reason the minimum temperature will continue to hover just over 0 celsius over the weekend in the Valley, dipping to minus on the outskirts. Expect some buildup on Friday and Saturday. Sunday will start frosty, but afternoon will be sunny and bright.



FRI
16-00

SAT
16-01

SUN
18-01



BIKRAM RAI

UNDER SURVEILLANCE: Police stand guard at Boudha on Saturday, during Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jibao's five-hour visit. Over 200 Tibetans and non-Tibetans were detained during the visit.



BIKRAM RAI

THE CATS' OUT OF THE BAG: Lawmaker and chairman of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi) Shyam Sundar Gupta and his accomplices, who were arrested on charges of abducting Kathmandu-based businessman Pawan Sanghai, being made public by the police in the capital on Tuesday.



KAUN BANEGA LAKHAPATI: Ncell's Abdu Jabbor Kayumov, Sanju Koirala and CEO Pasi Koistinen announced the first lucky SIM serial number to become a millionaire at the Radisson Hotel on Tuesday. Seven more lucky winners will be announced in the coming days. Customers need to switch off their phones, take out the Ncell SIM card and verify the 19-digit number printed at the back with the winning numbers.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



PICS: MADHU SUDHAN GURAGAN

Everything organic

American farmers make Kavre their home to learn and teach sustainable agriculture

Times ecofair
11-12 FEBRUARY 2012

RUBEENA MAHATO in KAVRE

Paatleket, 12 kms down the mountain from Dhulikhel, seems like just another scenic village you pass while speeding down the Arniko Highway. Few stop here. But this is where Americans Judith Chase and her husband Jim have made their home, practicing and promoting a model of sustainable agriculture in their small but busy organic farm. There are more than 1,000 species of vegetables, fruits, berries and fodder here, all grown without using chemical fertilisers or pesticides. The farm has a strict policy against using hybrid and GMOs and encourages use of Nepali open pollinated seeds. Even with less input the yield is high and their fresh produces are a hit in the organic markets of Kathmandu where they are bought in good price by expats and now an increasingly local clientele. But growing and selling organic products are only a part of what they do at their farm called 'Everything Organic'. The farm serves as a school to train Nepali farmers on the methods of bio-intensive agriculture based on deep-digging, use of compost and insect control through diverse



cropping patterns and botanical sprays. "We teach farmers right from the basics, impart them the skills, and when they start cultivation, help them find market for it," Judith says, "the goal is to develop a community of organic farmers with a cooperative marketing system." Judith is hopeful because a similar initiative she started in Thimi in the 1980s trained 200 local women many of whom are still growing organic vegetables. At Paatleket, she hopes to replicate the project on a larger scale. "There is no reason why Nepali farmers have to be poor or have to eat chemical-laced food," says Judith, who is now looking to promote high value nuts and fruit trees among

Nepali farmers. On a clear Friday morning last week, a group of women from a nearby village were taking notes as Prem Lama, a pioneer organic farmer, was explaining the benefits of growing walnuts. Prem runs a very successful organic farm that supplies to hotels, restaurants and department stores in Kathmandu. Some of his salads and fruits are exported to Singapore. "It is only a matter of knowing which crop grows well in which climate and are profitable," says Lama who makes it to Paatleket to share his ideas with farmers every week. These women are on a month long residential training



where they learn about the benefits of organic farming, master the techniques of double digging and prepare compost and herbicides from locally available materials. By the end of the intensive course which the farm offers for free, the women are sent not just with the know-how to grow organic but a market for what they produce. A shop in Dhulikhel serves as the outlet for the freshly produced vegetables by local women. With more production, the nursery hopes the prices will go down and people would be more interested in purchasing organic products. Nanumaya Tamang is a trainee, and recounts how using

excessive chemical fertiliser had ruined her soil. "I could not break the ground with my axe. I have stopped using chemicals since then but the soil is still hard." Judith says there is a lot to be learned from local farmers and has started an initiative to save seeds by involving women. She says: "These seeds are well adapted to local soil and climate, and are better than imported hybrids. Why spend money on expensive imported seeds when we have better options in Nepal?" www.everythingorganicnursery.com

nepalitimes.com
Organic growth, #440

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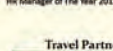
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ANURAG ACHARYA

Monks in the middle

Saturday 14 January, the people of Kathmandu woke up to the strange sight of road dividers being removed, the streets being hosed down and the sidewalk swept clean. It was the unannounced flying visit of the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao who arrived at noon and left by 4PM.

Most people were happy with a cleaner city, but there were others who were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Ratna Tripathi, 71, from Kavre was visiting relatives in Baneswor when he was detained for half an hour along with dozens of commuters. "I just want to cross the street," he kept telling the police.

People were chased back from sidewalks into inner alleys. Even those watching from shops along the streets were asked to go inside. "Get him, kick him if he does not listen," a police sub-inspector shouted to his juniors.

Hundreds of police and army were deployed along Baudha, Swayambhu and Ekanta Kuna, areas with substantial Tibetan populations. Ngawang Lakpa Sherpa (picture above), a monk from Lamidanda, was detained in Gaushala while trying to get to the airport to catch a flight home to meet his parents. The police searched his robes and luggage, but refused to let him go. Prem Lama, who was riding with Ngawang to the airport was also detained. Ngawang was bundled off to Gaushala police station and missed his flight.

"I am a citizen of this country and this is how I get treated, just because I am wearing a robe," Nawang told Nepali Times. Over 200 monks, pilgrims and even tourists with Chinese passports were detained because police suspected they may be planning an anti-Chinese demonstration. A vaguely "Tibetan look" was enough to get one arrested on the streets. A Vietnamese monk was arrested in Gaushala.

Near Pashupati, a bus carrying Indian tourists from Himachal Pradesh was stopped and taken to Gaushala police station. Dolma Negi, a member of the tour group, was questioned repeatedly about the purpose of her visit just because she had a Tibetan-sounding name. She kept saying she was a tourist like everybody else.

Anurag Acharya

Stuck again

If the debate over whether to have a presidential or prime ministerial system is so polarizing, imagine what it will be like if we ever have a French model constitution. With the 31 May un-extendable deadline for the CA looming, the parties seem to be stuck over what kind of state structure and governance we should have in the new constitution.

While the Nepali Congress and the UML have teamed up with 16 smaller parties in favor of an 'improved' parliamentary system, the Maoists have patched up their internal rifts to vigorously push for a directly-elected executive president.

The Madhesi parties have not come out openly in favour of a directly elected executive, which means they may have some reservations about the system. But as long as they are in the government, it is unlikely they will support the parliamentary system, either.

As long as the parties are not talking about meeting half-way, wasting time in trying to impose their line on the other is going to mean further delays. In an effort to pressurise one another, the parties are opening side fronts. The Maoists have refused to budge on integration of their fighters, while the NC is stalling CA proceedings over the government's decision to legalise decisions taken by Maoist 'people's government' during the years of conflict. The Madhesi Front is threatening to bring down the government over the stalled four-point deal that helped form the coalition.

All this is unfolding on the backdrop of a 14 hour electricity cut, severe fuel shortages despite a fresh hike in prices. An ex-minister was arrested on charges of kidnapping a businessman, and the Prime Minister is so stressed out he has taken a long weekend off in Dhulikhel.

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Gods no more

Many tourists are put off by the garbage, pollution, cheating and harassment

STUTI SHARMA

Nepal may have got record number of visitors during Nepal Tourism Year 2011, but the quality of their experience in general has suffered from harassments by touts, to theft and muggings. Nepal's have been exhorted to treat tourists like "gods", but the reality seems to be far from it. A random sampling of visitors to Nepal shows that although most tourists admire the country and the people and say they enjoyed their stay, many were put off by the garbage, pollution, cheating and harassment. The total visitors to Nepal last year was 735,932, less than the targeted 1 million, but a 22 per cent jump from 2010. The police said they reported 307 cases of theft of tourists in one year, but admit many cases of harassment and theft go unreported. American student Calin Kearns was almost mugged outside Boudha recently, but managed to fend off her attackers with a pocket knife. "Perhaps my attacker also realised that I was twice his size and he ran off without looking back," Kearns told us. Sexual harassment of both the verbal or physical kinds plague female tourists. Australian Morgaine van Wingerden says her worst experience was being groped in a crowded market one morning. "I couldn't tell who did it," she says, "there seems to be a notion that tourists are available or that they have lots of money to spend." The Tourist Police, however, say that they only had one reported case of sexual harassment last year.


Inspector Chini Maya Tamang of the Tourist Police says most of the complaints are thefts, and her job is to liaise between the victim and the local police regarding paperwork for insurance claims. "We treat both tourists and civilian cases with the same legalities in cases of sexual harassment and cases are handed over to the local police if investigation is needed," said Tamang. Although embassy websites and tourism guidebooks warn visitors about being aware of the situation, visitors say their most important source of information are chat sites and blogging sites where individual trekkers and tourists post their personal experiences. Asked what the government and Nepal Tourism Board could do, most visitors say they still feel much safer in Nepal than in most countries in the region, but making tourism a part of the school curriculum to teach students that a foreigner is not just "white", that they are not always "rich" and that they are not sexually promiscuous would be a first step. While the horror stories about what some tourists have to endure in India still makes Nepal sound better, tourism experts say, rising urban poverty, joblessness and impunity could worsen the security situation in Nepal as well. Despite her incident, van Wingerden says she is coming back to Nepal soon. She says: "Whatever problems I faced here, people always came forward to help me. At the end of the day, it always works out in Nepal."



MIN RATNA BAIRACHARYA

TOURIST TIPS

- Leave valuables at your hotel's safety box
- Try not to look lost even if you are
- Dress generic
- Try to be less conspicuous
- A smattering of Nepali language will help
- Beware of backpack slashers
- It's tough, but avoid crowded places
- Learn Nepali numerals and memorise taxi numbers
- Exchange money only at authorised centres





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Hi and bye

Editorial in
Nepal Samacharpatra,
15 January

संकेत
समाचारपत्र

Some visits are tediously long, and don't yield results. The Chinese premier's visit this week has proved to be one of the most fruitful ones, although it lasted only for four hours. The visit by the close neighbor who has always stood by Nepal without interfering in its internal affairs has always been very special, and the agreements signed between the two countries for cooperation on different areas has endured. This visit was no exception.

The visit came as a surprise for many, but that was because it was a precautionary step by the government to ensure the visit was not called off for the same reasons it was previously. The good news is, the visit has promoted Nepal's image internationally and concerns about Nepal's ability to host high profile visits, if any, have been removed. Besides, the misconception that Nepal has become a playground for anti-Chinese activities have also been cleared. Most importantly, the visit has earned us Beijing's goodwill for the ongoing peace process and constitution drafting.

There is no point wasting time over what we did not achieve, but to appreciate the goodwill shown by the Chinese to arrange for the visit on such short notice. This can be the beginning of Nepal's diplomatic rise and instead of being over-critical we should prepare for a historic visit by another neighbouring head of the government, the Indian Prime Minister in the near future.

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*,
15 January

नयाँ पत्रिका

The visit by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao has taken Nepal-China friendship to a new level. Wen and his team spent four hours in Kathmandu during which they signed over a dozen important agreements with Nepal on different areas of social, economic and cultural cooperation.

The visit was shelved for a while and there is little doubt, directly or indirectly, the immaturity displayed by the Nepali side was at fault. But the government rebounded and through its own initiative, arranged the visit on a short notice. Besides the increase in Chinese aid to Nepal, the visit by the government head of a global superpower has boosted Nepal's international image. So, although a short one, the visit will prove to become a milestone in bilateral relations.



BIKRAM RAI

Editorial in *Kantipur*,
15 January

कान्तिपुर

The Chinese Premier might have spent only four hours in Kathmandu but the length of his stay did not take away the importance of the message that it left behind. This was the first visit by a Chinese PM in a decade and it should have been marked by a national celebration. The secrecy surrounding the visit put off many, and some in diplomatic circles even questioned the importance of the visit. Chinese side officially declared it a state visit, thus dousing such speculations.

The political exchanges and agreements during the short trip are more noteworthy than the circumstance in which the visit took place. As soon as he landed, Wen and his team went directly to Singha Darbar where the two countries signed a dozen agreements. As per the agreement, Nepal will receive Rs 9.75 billion rupees in Chinese assistance, and Rs 1.6 billion rupees additional funds for the peace process. More than financial support itself, it is the political significance that explains the Chinese goodwill towards Nepal.

Editorial in *Ghatana Ra Bichar*,
18 January

घटना बिकार

Our cynical nationalists who like to play India off against China must have learnt a lesson from Wen Jiabao's statement: "Nepal needs to deepen its friendship with India." India is not just our neighbour, but the open border has enabled exchange of culture and traditions. Nepali daughters have been married to our Indian neighbours and their daughters have made homes here too. It is not a relationship that can be terminated at anyone's whim. And yet, there are people who think they can benefit by forcing India and China to fight a proxy war over us. This does not seem to affect India much because it is preoccupied with its economy and upgrading its international status. China understands this and that is why Wen told Nepali leaders to sort things out with India. If China itself wants good relations with India, why do we want them to fight over us? It is clear that using the 'China card' to threaten India no longer works. In fact Nepal's strategic location means we can benefit from greater cooperation between our two neighbours.

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 15 January

नागरिक

Despite a tight schedule, the Chinese premier took out time to meet all the major political stakeholders including leaders of the parties in opposition, during his short stay. Apart from giving continuity to regular support in Nepal's development, China committed to provide Rs 1.6 billion rupees in budgetary aid for the peace process. But more than anything else, it is the Chinese goodwill gesture that has won them affection from Nepalis.

It is unfortunate that the immature diplomacy shown by Nepal's government not only delayed the visit, but the Nepali people could not even welcome the leader of a neighbouring country with flags and flowers on the streets of Kathmandu. Although both the foreign and home ministers visited Beijing to assuage the Chinese about the security situation, China was still wary about anti-Chinese demonstrations. This is the reason why the visit was kept a secret until the last hour.

Nepal has been China's friend in need and barring a few diplomatic glitches, the relationship has stayed cordial and warm. When the world was against China, Nepal was among the few countries that supported the Chinese at the UN. The Chinese understand Nepal's strategic limitations and international human rights commitments on Tibetan refugees issue, but the government must do more to ensure its turf is not used against its neighbour.



QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Nepal must continue its cordial relations with India.”

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during his recent visit to Nepal

“Nepal should strengthen relations with China.”

DPM Bijay Gachhadar quoting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday.



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Who, What, Where, Wen?

That seems to have been the plan all along: string us along with the fuel shortage for nearly two months until the lines got longer and longer and the people got more and more desperate, and just before they started setting fire to petrol stations, raise prices, allow hoarders to make a killing, let supply go back to normal so customers like us heave a sigh of relief. Then the ruling party gets its own student win to organise some ‘controlled protests’ so the anger on the streets doesn’t get out of hand. Brilliant, it works every time.



Meanwhile, **Chairman Dazzling** has found the Pistachio Palace a security risk because of the narrow lanes leading up to the Naya Bazar residence, and has moved to a better appointed villa in Lazimpat. Now, neighbours won’t be able to eavesdrop on him channel surfing to watch himself on ABC tv, and won’t be able to see him pacing on the terrace. PKD has been telling trusted foreign friends he fears for his life, hinting that the threat is not from the Rajabuddies but his own Mau Mau.



Meanwhile, **Awesome, Jr** who fills in as computer assistant,



bodyguard, and general purpose gopher seems to be bored silly in Daddy’s shadow. Ever since he was caught in flagrante by local paparazzi passed out on a sofa with his fly open in a Dhulikhel hotel last year, **Comrade Sonny Boy** has been compared to another important scion, clown prince Paras. But Dear Leader now wants to earn his own laurels. So, off he goes to climb Mt Everest this spring in the company of fellow-comrades. The idea is to trek all the way from Lumbini to Base Camp and then stick the hammer-sickle-carabiner banner on the summit. Both father and son seem to have this obsession

with Lumbini and a film epic called **Red Star over Everest**.



Time to have a dress code and etiquette lessons for our leaders, especially when they meet foreign dignitaries in winter:

- Don’t give imported gladioli bouquets to visiting heads of state, especially if they are coming for only five hours
- mufflers that cover head, ears and back of neck are definitely out
- So are turtlenecks inside jackets
- Whatever you do, don’t bad mouth your political rivals in front of the leader of a foreign country. Luckily Wen Jaibao’s

interpreter couldn’t understand Jhusil mumbling in his beard about the untrustworthy Maoists, so we were saved a major national humiliation

- Newly appointed ambassadors, including Maobaddie political appointees, may also need a briefing before they set off to become roving national embarrassments and plenipotentiaries.



Just to recap, let’s make a three-point summary of the Wen’s visit to Nepal and Gachh’s visit to Delhi:

1. China gave us money to pay the Indians to import petroleum.
2. China told us to stop whining, and sort things out with India.
3. India told us to stop whining and sort things out with China.



Homely Minister Bijay Babu followed Comrade Wen’s instructions by the letter and promptly air-dashed to Delhi. On Wednesday he met **PM MMS** who told him: “What are you irritating the Chinese. Grow up!” (Or words to that effect). So Gachh invited him to visit Nepal

for five hours, too. Wonder if the Injun Army knows it is dealing with a red sandalwood wholesaler who plays a crucial role in the decimation of south India’s forests by facilitating the transit of the contraband timber through Nepal to China. (Speaking of which, we hear **Gach Jr** was pretty openly doing his collection rounds when he accompanied Dad to Beijing.) This must be what our government meant when we said we want to profit from our geostrategic location between India and China.



Firanghee Minister Kaji Naran Kamred slyly got the cabinet to endorse his plan to seek a spondilitis operation in Hokkaido for Rs2.5 million, and since most other cabinet members have skeletons in their own closets, no one dared ask him why the operation couldn’t be performed in Nepal itself since we have world class surgeons like Dr Devkota and Dr Banskota here. But get this, we tax payers are not just footing the bill for Kaji’s operation, we are also paying for the ticket of his **masseuse**. Yes, the same one who accompanied the minister to New York and the SAARC Summit.



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