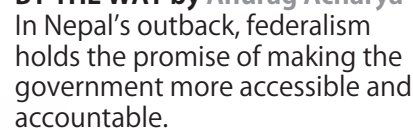


BIKRAM RA

I have brought you thus far, is the message from Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai in his address to the nation on Thursday evening as he marked the emptying of Maoist camps. The move paves the way for integrating some of the ex-guerrillas into the Nepal Army, and finalising the constitution in the month that is left. Leaders have to find a way around two contentious issues: federalism and type of government. Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, keen to claim credit for progress so far, summoned editors on Wednesday to say the door was now open for a directly-elected presidential system.

page 11, 12, 13



Contending with a tormented past, Kalikot works to reinvent itself.

**Meaty, Mouth-Watering, Delicious
Burger @ grill me**



Jhamsikhel, 5535294

An advertisement for HIDESIGN leather goods. The background is a textured, dark brown surface. In the center, the HIDESIGN logo is displayed, consisting of a stylized white 'H' that resembles a leather bag. Below the logo, the text 'real leather crafted the forgotten way' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text 'HIDESIGN BOUTIQUE' is written in a larger, white, sans-serif font. Below this, the address 'Below Laxmi Bank, Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk' and the phone number 'samjhana 5524812, 9849947346' are listed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. On the left side, a man in a grey long-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers is standing, looking out a window, carrying a dark brown leather messenger bag. On the right side, a woman in a colorful patterned blouse and dark pants is standing, looking towards the camera, carrying a large, bright yellow leather tote bag. The overall aesthetic is sophisticated and emphasizes the quality of the leather.

As a retrospective, Nepali Times brings a selection of opinion columns from the past 600 weekly editions of the paper since May 2000 during which the country went from constitutional to absolute monarchy, suffered a war and a royal-military coup, saw a ceasefire, an interim government, the election of Maoists to power and the peace process. To read more, readers have free access to the full Nepali Times archive on www.nepalitimes.com

The post-1990 political decay in this country led to widespread disillusionment with democracy. Frustrated with patronage, corruption and rigged elections, the ultra left turned to armed struggle as the way out. The ultra right, still smarting from the loss of its absolute power, tried to capitalise on the mass cynicism as a way to regain lost authority. The people were not given the right to choose the middle way.

So, the October Fourth process decapitated national level parties, while the Maoists tore down an emerging culture of electoral accountability at the grassroots. Together, the left and right have taken this country back to medieval Robin Hoodland.

The first casualty of this erosion of

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Editorial in Nepali Times #208 of 6-12 August 2004 as king Gyanendra started his “creeping coup” to take the country back to absolute monarchy and after the results of the Himalmedia poll showed nearly 25 per cent of respondents favouring the Maoists if they stood in elections.

democratic values and a tolerant, pluralistic culture has been the rule of law. It is now a free-for-all. Every individual, every group, every party is for itself. A minister who tries to control corruption in the labour export industry is hounded from all sides. The old mafia has been replaced by a new mafia. In the absence of democratic checks-and-balances, a new generation of well-connected individuals has its hands deep inside the honey pot. Besides the Maoist tax, there is this new layer of patronage that

anyone who wishes to trade, invest or do business in this country has to now buy protection from. There is little room anymore for values that benefit the nation and society: like transparency, honesty, integrity and corporate social responsibility.

Eight-and-a-half years, and this is what the Maoist war has done to this country. It has created the conditions for a return to absolute monarchy, militarised the kingdom to a level not seen since the Anglo-Nepal wars 200 years ago, brutalised society

with ruthless cruelty and snatched away from the people the civil liberties they secured in 1990.

And who benefits from this mad war? A few arms merchants and their clients in Kathmandu, plus a handful of hardline comrades spellbound by a discredited ideology. But the conflict does provide an opportunity for us to reform the structural problems in this society: the top-heavy military-monarchy combine, genuine devolution, redistribution of opportunity and restoring the people's right to electoral representation.

The people want the middle way. There is a lesson in this week's internet poll for the Maoists: at press time, nearly a quarter of the respondents were saying they would vote for the CPN-(Maoist) party if it renounced violence and took part in elections. What are you waiting for, comrades?

The Kathmandu spring

This State of the State column by **CK Lal** was censored from the 11-17 February 2005 edition of Nepali Times #234 after the Feburary First coup by king Gyanendra. It is finally printed below for the first time.

Now that political stability is set to return, many journalists fear that they could be redundant. No shenanigans of party-chiefs to report, no significant political affair to analyse, no perceptible trend to spot, no movement on the horizon to predict, and no ideological drift to pontificate about, no more parachutists to brief, nothing but official communiqués and florid ministerial speeches to transcribe.

Since peace has begun to reign inside the Ring Road, life is so normal that even a man biting a dog doesn't make news anymore. The consternation of reporters and editors is understandable.

Due to rationed news and censored views in the public domain, it's no longer necessary for us to whack our brains with the lessons of the past, put them in perspective with experiences of the present and then risk being proved wrong by trying to predict the future. It's much safer to navel-gaze and shoot off another column befitting the ground reality.

Outside the valley, newspapers have been asked to keep mum for a while so that their freedom can be protected. And some human rights activists and journalists have been taken into preventive custody to protect their life and liberty.

In the capital, journalists are enjoying unprecedented levels of freedom of expression. Cartoonists have the liberty to lampoon any party leader of their choice. There is no restriction on lambasting the misdeeds of Girija Prasad Koirala, ridiculing the stupidity of Sher Bahadur Deuba or satirising the insatiable greed of Madhab Kumar Nepal. The less said about the excesses of their acolytes in the press the better. Many opinion-writers, like this scribe here, have already started exercising these unfettered freedoms.

Freedom of civil society to welcome royal proclamations knows no bounds. People are free to stage flag-waving motorcycle rallies in defiance of a ban on demos, take out peace marches and shout slogans against corrupt leaders. Surely, no peace-loving citizen in an insurgency-torn kingdom could ask for anything more.

Businessmen, wilful defaulters, wheeler dealers and movers and shakers have discovered that they have full freedom to place colourful ads in daily newspapers welcoming February First. This has a multiplier effect: it infuses cash into hardup media houses that haven't paid salaries to staff for months. The guardians of the national interest are now free to scoff at the international community who have been mindlessly voicing concerns for peace, democracy, and human rights in clear violation of our sovereign right to do whatever we want.

Plato said the human soul is a chariot pulled by the two horses of reason and emotion. Reason demands that we learn to live in the present. Emotion dictates that we take the help of music to endure the unendurable. Perhaps that's the reason local FM stations have been told: “No news, no views, no analyses, no discussions, only music.” Thank god for these small mercies.



CENSORED

Page 2-3 of the Nepali Times #234 of 11-18 February 2005 after the military imposed direct censorship on the media. Soldiers entered the newsroom and would expunge content deemed objectionable before the paper went to press. A cartoon that was taken out from the op-ed showed a tear drop below the rainbow eyes of the Buddha. CK Lal's State of the State column was censored in its entirety, and the editors replaced it with the picture of a ten-day old baby who was born at the exact moment of king Gyanendra's coup on 1 February 2001. Even a letter to the editor was taken out.

All the news that is fit to print

In his Under My Hat column, **Kunda Dixit** satirised the clampdown on the press and the column itself was censored in the #234 edition of Nepali Times of 11-17 February 2005.

Statutory Notice: An official Fact-finding Committee has pre-tested this column on lab animals and certified that it contains permitted synthetic dyes and preservatives and has declared it fit for human consumption provided the childproof seal is not broken at the time of purchase. However, one can't be too careful during these perilous times so readers are advised to exercise individual caution on a case-by-case basis. Management is not responsible for the consequences, especially if perpetrators are apprehended perusing this in broad daylight, charged with indecent exposure, and sentenced to 36 lashes with a wet rattan cane on each hind cheek.

Now that we have those legal niceties out of the way, we can get down to what you have all been impatiently waiting for with barely-concealed boredom, which is a roundup of this week's main events.

Leaders Irked by Continued Freedom

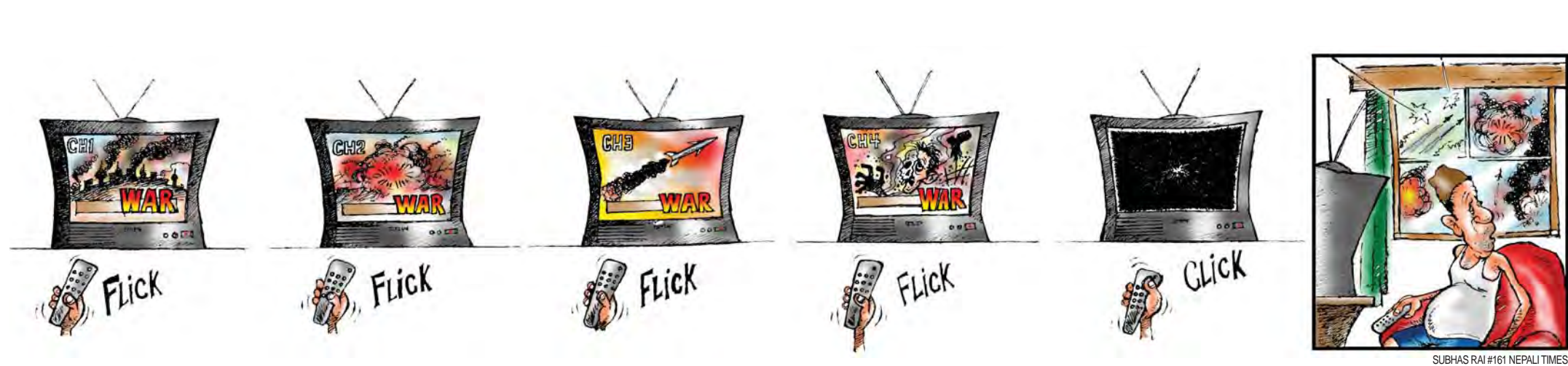
Political leaders and activists who have not been taken into custody have complained that they are still free to roam around the streets.

"It's been a week and they have still not put me under preventive detention," complained a Nepali Congress leader on condition of anonymity, "This is discrimination, what do I have to do, burn some more tyres?"

A multi-partisan group calling itself the All-Nepal Federation of Unjustly Undetained Politicians threatened to launch a decisive nationwide stir if their demand to be arrested without further ado is not implemented with immediate effect by the concerned higher-up authority.

The statement said: "If they don't put us under house arrest, then we'll go into cardiac arrest."





Bandhonomics

Artha Beed's Economic Sense column from Nepali times #90 of 19-25 April 2002 about the epidemic of bandas.

In Nepal as in other South Asian countries, all parties that have lcome to power, or even remained in opposition, have used bandhs effectively and institutionalised it with the necessary ingredients of violence, coercion and fear. This is why even a banda called by an otherwise obscure association or group of people is scary and so vehicles remain off the roads, shutters are down and all institutions are closed.

Many keen observers of our glorious way of life insist that bandhs are so successful in Nepal because they fit in perfectly with a core characteristic of the Nepali psyche-evading work. Although methinks this is an overly cynical, possibly even defeatist position to take, it is true that bandhs are often openly discussed in terms of being a windfall break, especially for people in government, when one signs the attendance register, to be sure, but follows that by simply sitting back for a fun-filled day with exciting card games, endless cups of tea, naps and a few discreet moments of personal grooming. On a bandh, even government civil servants, what an ironic description, at the highest level make no attempt to either work themselves or make sure that others do too.

Duty in distress

Column by Hari Roka in the aftermath of the royal massacre in the 6 June 2001 edition of Nepali Times #46.



It may be too hasty to hope that the Peoples' War being waged by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) against the whole system for over half a decade would provide a new path for the nation. The insurgency has helped push the nation further into confusion and disarray. It is not possible to expect this power to steer the nation away from the current crisis,

since it is difficult to gauge how organised the movement is.

Trapped between the structurally underdeveloped political groups and the political confusion and anarchy they themselves have created, the biggest tragedy in the history of the country occurred in the royal palace on the night of 1 June, 2001. This incident and the events that followed it have destabilised the palace, which was perceived to be a solid and monolithic structure for more than 250 years. This last week has pushed the nation into an unprecedented dilemma and crisis. The Nepali nation is bewildered and alarmed.

At this moment of instability and lawlessness, many may be tempted to fish in muddy waters. But doing so would only invite more grief to the people and the country. Events in the world and in neighbouring countries have already demonstrated that during times of such uncertainty, reactionary forces from inside as well as outside will try to push nations towards the precipice.

The insurgency’s human face

Barbara Adams wrote these lines in her Barbara’s Beat column in the 11-17 May 2001 #44 edition of the Nepali Times, just before the royal massacre.

The new Plan to defeat the Maoists is supposed to win the “hearts and minds” of Nepalis, but this slogan which might have made sense three-and-a-half years ago when it was rejected by Girija Koirala, is a joke today.

The Maoists have already won the hearts and minds of much of Nepal including many intellectuals in Kathmandu. If the prime minister thinks the way to win over the villagers is to send more and more force to shoot through the hearts and blow out the minds of Maoists or their sympathisers, they today understand even less than they did three years ago when they launched Kilo Sierra II. One only needs to look at the same discredited faces who still surround and advise the prime minister, and who have presumably concocted another exercise in killing, to realise why this plan is doomed to failure.

It is now becoming more and more apparent that the process of creating a peaceful and socially just Nepal can only begin with a departure from the political scene of Koirala and his self-serving entourage.

Underbelly of the beast

Kanak Mani Dixit writing from detention in Duwakot after the royal regime arrested him and other human rights activists in edition #294 of Nepali Times 14-20 April 2006.

DUWAKOT-Taken in by Kathmandu's royal regime with two dozen other protesters last week for willfully (and with prior announcement) breaking the curfew order, this writer had an opportunity to see how a ‘militarising’ autocratic state machinery can ride rough-shod over some of the weakest members of society. It was an opportunity to take a look at the underbelly of the monster that the government can be. What we have seen during our incarceration is something that the privileged with contacts in high places or money to buy oneself safe passage rarely care to see or understand.

Four kids were resting inside a bus at a bus stop where they work as cleaners when they were dragged out: Dhruba Timilsina, 17, of Hetuada, Buddha Lama, 16, of Sindhupalchok, Ramesh Thapa Magar, 17 and Ram Lama, 20, of Chapagaon. They have all been moved elsewhere. Individuals who are in the lowest class bracket in detention get the toilet that is furthest and the rice that is the worst. It will be important for the ICRC to determine their fate and whereabouts.



One year itch

The late Saubhagya Shah wrote a regular Guest Column, and this one is an excerpt from the #41 edition of Nepali Times 23-29 March 2007.

There must be something in our national psyche that makes the Nepali mood swing so swiftly between irrational exuberance and incorrigible pessimism. Much has happened politically in the past year that has generated immense enthusiasm for the future. The whole state machinery, the political parties, civil society, and regional and ethnic forums had begun to focus their energies on the task of holding the elections to the constituent assembly. For a moment it seemed as if we

could all live together happily ever after.

Alas, except for just the small matter of the South that had been forgotten during the celebrations. The sudden violence that engulfed the eastern Tarai left April’s triumphant paradigm in tatters. There was the sight of mighty leaders and their auxiliary intelligentsia first dismissing the Madhesi uprising as the handiwork of a few miscreants, then threatening the use of force to put out fires supposedly ignited by fundamentalists and reactionaries, and finally making a 180-degree turn to embrace the same revolt as their own - all within a week.

Murkier and murkier

Prashant Jha's Plain Speaking column dealt often with the fate of the Madhes Movement ahead of the 2008 elections. This one is from edition #392 of Nepali Times 21-27 march, 2008.

The main enemies of the Madhesi people are the present Madhesi leaders themselves. It is now increasingly apparent that the second Madhesi movement of January-February happened only to generate a support base and ensure political survival for the three parties. Their demands (undefined autonomy, self determination) did little to help ordinary Madhesis. The promise of inclusion had already been made earlier, and was only reiterated. All the three-week agitation did was channelise Madhesi discontent, and generate a wave. But in less than a week, the Madhesi parties blew it all away.



Thapadom

Manjushree Thapa in this column from #149 of Nepali Times 13-20 June 2003 pokes fun at the return of the days of the Thapas.

Till last week, the Thapas merely headed only the Royal Nepal Army (Pyar Jung Thapa), the Nepal Police (Shyam Bhakta Thapa) and the Armed Police Force (Sahabir Thapa, who is of Magar origin unlike the others, all Chettri Thapas).

Now Surya Bahadur Thapa has become the prime minister for the fifth time in his life-not counting his chairmanship of King Mahendra’s advisory council in 1958. The last time there were so many Thapas in government, the Panchayat regime collapsed under their weight.

What do non-Thapas make of this? Mostly they are too tactful to say anything, not wanting to engender caste disharmony, though the republicanists among them do secretly wonder if the weight of Thapas will now lead to another regime change. The Bahuns, who

are sick of being blamed for everything that has gone wrong in the past 12 years, breathe easier now that they can point out the Chettris, who did after all govern Nepal for the entire period preceding 1990.

The Thapas themselves are quietly exhilarated, discussing at family gatherings the infinite kinship lines that ultimately-by marriage, over generations, many times removed-connect them all to each other. In the end a Thapa is a Thapa unless he is a Magar Thapa, in which case he should consider changing his name or at least tacking on a nom de guerre.

So: The Nepali state has dismally failed to be inclusive. What, other than this, is there to say? The Chettri Thapas are back in control of the court. Break out the Khukuri Rum.



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BIZ BRIEFS

44 and counting

Thai Airways International has completed 44 years of operation in Nepal. The airways has announced special promotional fares for destinations like Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Australia, and Japan.

Real winner

Real has announced Rajendra KC from Kathmandu as the first week winner of its recently launched Real Fruit Power Contest. KC has won an imported mountain bike. Real Fruit power Contest, is a 13-week long SMS based competition with the bumper prize of Rs 500,000 as scholarship.



Celebration on wheels

HERO HONDA Syakar Company, the authorised distributor of Hero Honda motorcycles in Nepal, has launched its New Year scheme. Customers will receive discount up to Rs 6500 on the purchase of every bike or scooter and Philips home appliances, and a chance to win Philips products worth Rs 100,000.

Spreading love

The Live to Love Foundation promoted by the venerable Drukpa Lineage, a 1000 year old Buddhist sect headquartered in the Himalayas, announced Michelle Yeoh as its second ambassador. The internationally renowned actress Yeoh joins well known Indian film star Aamir Khan as the brand ambassador for the Foundation.

One stop solution

NepalSutra, a web portal which caters to the needs of people travelling to Nepal has been launched. The online interactive medium helps travellers browse through options regarding travel, adventure, dining and shopping in Nepal.


Spreading wings

Sanima Bank Sanima Bank has opened its newest branch at Butwal-8, Amarpur. The branch was inaugurated jointly by Directors Mahesh Ghimire and Bharat Kumar Pokharel along with Chief Executive Officer Kumar Lamsal. With this recent addition, Sanima now has 22 full-fledged outlets throughout the country.

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HIMAL

KHABARPATRIKA
13-27 April 2012

COVER

Made in Nepal
Making and marketing of the brand Nepal

EDITORIAL

Never Again

COMMENTARY

Sealed brains – Kiran Nepal and Rameshwor Bohra
United against extremism – Purusottam Dahal
Banking on Agriculture – Tulasi Gautam

REPORTS

Fleeing Madhes
12 point course
Living on other's future

INTERVIEW

Pradeep Gyawali

This year, let's promise to clear the backlog of bills in the parliament and ministries



MY TWO PAISA

Paavan Mathema

With the May deadline for the constitution looming, our legislators will be burning the midnight oil again. However, with national attention focused on the constitution, we forget that the parliament is also responsible for addressing state bills and policies and endorsing necessary reforms.

Perhaps it's wrong to expect any extra effort from our lawmakers, who have failed to complete their primary task even after several extensions of the deadline. But it's been over a year since any major bill facilitating trade and commerce was endorsed by the parliament. In fact, over two dozen acts and policies pertaining to the business sector have been collecting dust in the parliament and ministries, some for over five years.

With changes in local and international business dynamics and technological

transformation it is essential to review existing laws and introduce new policies. Acts and policies, and their reviews are drafted by the concerned ministries, forwarded to the government which then tables it at the parliament for endorsement. However, in Nepal's case, this route seems to take years to complete. Our economy is forced to run on guidelines that are more than two decades old in some cases.

More than three months into the “Investment Year”, our Foreign Trade Regulation Act and Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Policy are still under review. Also under inspection are the Intellectual Property Policy and Anti-dumping Act. According to UNCTAD’s latest World Investment Report, Nepal is in the bottom rung alongside Afghanistan, North Korea and Bhutan when it comes to attracting foreign direct investment. FDI commitment to the country declined by 48.35 per cent in 2010-11. Among



other factors, bureaucratic hurdles and unclear policies discourage foreign investors. The review is expected to comb out unnecessary clutter from the policies and streamline the investment process. If we want the investment year to bear fruits, we must expedite the review method.


Hydropower, our most prized investment sector has

received much attention. But the proposed Electricity Act and the Electricity Regulatory Commission Act, prepared in 2008 and registered in the parliament in 2009, are pending. The Industrial Enterprise Act is dated 1992 and has not moved forward from the review stage for years. Garment manufacturers and exporters have been seeking speedy approval of the bill for setting up two Special Economic Zones for garment, carpet and handicraft industries.

The bill has been awaiting the parliament's approval for the past three years. Bills relating to labour, competition, quality standardisation, property and asset management are also pending.

Bills have not been passed even when we are bound by our pledges to international organisations. Nepal narrowly escaped being blacklisted by the

Financial Action Task Force, the global anti-money laundering watchdog for not endorsing three bills- Mutual Legal Assistance Bill, Extradition Bill and Bill Against Organised Crime two months ago. The bills have still not been passed and as the extended deadline ends, we are bound to run into trouble again. Our Bank and Financial Institution Act has not set the operational guidelines either for international banks which are scheduled to enter the Nepali market soon.

The lack of political will to make the economy a priority and push for timely reforms is preventing these bills from being approved. The only area where there is no backlog is tax laws, which are conveniently changed with the budget. The private sector has been lobbying for the endorsement of these bills. But in order to have a more conducive business and trade environment, our lawmakers need to be pressurised. Of course, this doesn't mean every bill in question should be given the green light in a hurry. But what can be completed in a few days, should not take five years. 







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Mountains in large format

An alpinist-author and a climber-photographer present the himals in new light

KANAK MANI DIXIT

Last week, as the world's highland countries were in Kathmandu to discuss climate change, and as the Great Himalayan Trail-wallahs approached the end of their odyssey, two Himalayan events were also held in the capital. One was the launch of the book *Five Treasures of Great Snow: The Story of Kangchenjunga* by Norwegian mountaineer Jon Gangdal. The other, the opening of an exhibition of wide-format Khumbu photography by American mountaineer and mountain portrait-artist Jeff Botz.

Gangdal's work is a competent history of all Himalayan mountaineering woven around his own climbs ending with the ascent of Kangchenjunga in

2009. The photo exhibition is a loving black-and-white tribute to Sagarmatha-Chomolungma and nearby massifs. The book is printed and published in Nepal in high quality, while the pictures are exhibited at Image Arc gallery at Kulima Tole in Patan.

Gangdal writes of his own mountaineering journey in the self-deprecating style of the great Himalayan raconteurs. For those of us who grew up on the lore of Mallory, Tilman and Shipton, he opens up the world of early non-English explorations of the Himalaya. While we know a bit about the French, mainly because of Maurice Herzog's *Annapurna*, the author reminds us of European climbers beyond the English-rendered accounts.

The legacy of Norway in Himalayan exploration is an eye-opener, for a

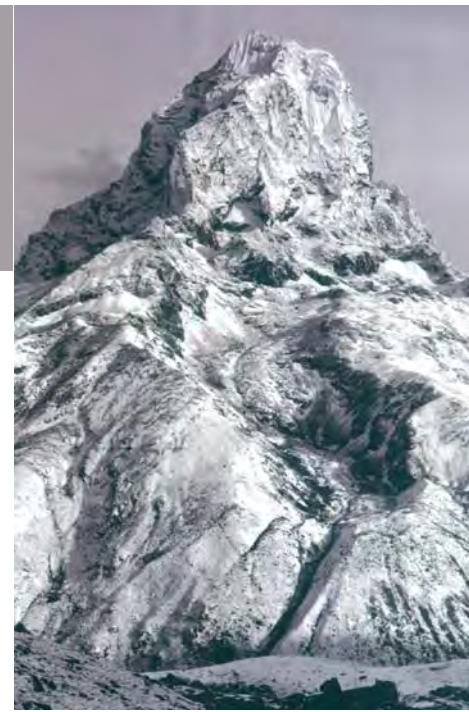
country that is known to Nepalis today almost exclusively as a 'donor'. Long before even Amundsen made his mark as a polar explorer, in 1907 two 21-year-old Norwegians pioneered on Kangchenjunga. Carl Wilhelm Rubenson and Ingvald Monrad Aas understood the value of the native porters, writes Gangdal, a sharp departure from the 'colonial expedition leaders from countries with strong imperialist traditions, whose style of leadership can be observed even today'. The author quotes from the historical work *Fallen Giants*, that Rubenson and Aas were 'the first to discover and publicise the remarkable mountaineering abilities of the Sherpas'.

Gangdal's own desire to climb Kangchenjunga was fired by the 'low celebrity status' of a mountain whose

name was so difficult to spell, the high rate of expedition failure on the 'least known and riskiest of mountains', its difficult approach, challenging weather and the lack of mountaineer traffic on the flanks.

The author unearths rare archival material on the German explorations of the Himalaya between the two world wars, starting on Kangchenjunga with Paul Bauer in 1929. Discomfort with the Nazi era, replete with the Swastika flag on the Himalayan glaciers, seems to have led to some timidity among the Germans from claiming their rightful role in Himalayan exploration, but history is history, says Gangdal.

Like so many mountaineers who develop deep links with highlander societies, Gangdal devotes himself to the upliftment of the Rolwaling people



in Dolakha District who live beneath Gauri Shankar-Tseringma. He got attached after losing a Rolwaling Sherpa colleague on Everest in 1994. In April 2002, with Nepal caught in armed conflict, Gangdal and his brother



बम्पर उपहार

एक जनालाई काठमाडौं नयाँ बानेश्वर नजिक वागमती अपार्टमेन्टमा २ बेडरुम अपार्टमेन्ट



हरेक महिना

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हरेक क्षण

हरेक ग्राहकले पाउनुहुनेछ हात खाली नजाने स्क्र्याच कूपन भित्र लाखौंका उपहार



हामी आउँदैछौं तपाईंको घरदैलोमा फेरि एक पटक

रजिष्टर गर्नका लागि CIR टाइप गरी ५२२५ मा एस.एम.एस. गर्नुहोला। यो सेवा नेपाल टेलिकममा मात्र उपलब्ध छ।

नोट : वार्षिक ग्राहक यी सबै योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
अर्धवार्षिक ग्राहक बम्परबाहेक अन्य योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
त्रैमासिक ग्राहक भने हरेक दिन र हरेक क्षण योजनामा मात्र सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन्।
*सर्तहरू लागू हुनेछ



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नयाँ वर्ष २०६८ को हार्दिक मंगलमय शुभकामना

नयाँ वर्ष २०६८, हाम्रो यात्रा महानुभावहरु तथा समस्त देशवासीहरुका लागि सुख, शान्ति र समृद्धिको वर्ष बनोस्, हाम्रो मंगलमय शुभकामना।



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unfurled on the summit of Manaslu a khada on which was written: "Peace in Nepal: Please stop killing, start talking!"

The author devotes considerable space to the Italian alpinist photographer Vittorio Sella, who explored the Kangchenjunga region as early as 1899, lugging a 30x40 cm large-format camera and tripod. Sella gifted posterity with fine Himalayan photography that is instructive till this day, including images of the Lepcha-Rong people who lived at the base of Kangchenjunga.

The American Jeff Botz is the



modern-day incarnation to Vittorio Sella, though Botz's own idol is Ansel Adams, photographer of the American West. While trekking in Nepal in the 1970s, Botz realised it was impossible to do justice to the high himals within the 35 mm frame. He taught himself to use a 10x14" camera,

which he carried around the Upper Khumbu to expose poetic images.

Botz introduces in exquisite detail the rock strata, overhangs, icefalls, seracs and snow fields. The views are unique even when the vantage point is standard, as in Thamserku from Tengboche, Everest from up on

Gokyo, or the Khumbu Icefall close-up from the Base Camp. Botz's capture of the summit pyramid of Taboche, in this writer's eyes, shows a mirror image of Ama Dablam standing across the valley, the same streaks of ice at the top and identical tilt of the torso (pictured, overleaf).

Author Gangdal and the Image Arc gallery could perhaps help bring a Vittorio Sella exhibition to Nepal in collaboration. The book and the exhibition both represent, one hopes, a barometer of the times. Peace is returning, and with it the alpinists and photographers willing to write, photograph, print and publish. All of which can only help Nepal make up for the lost decade-and-a-half. 🇳🇵

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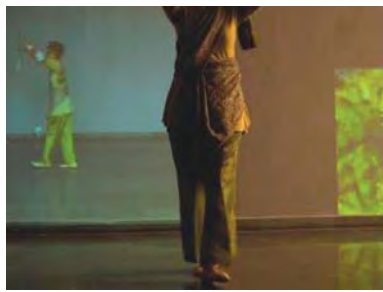
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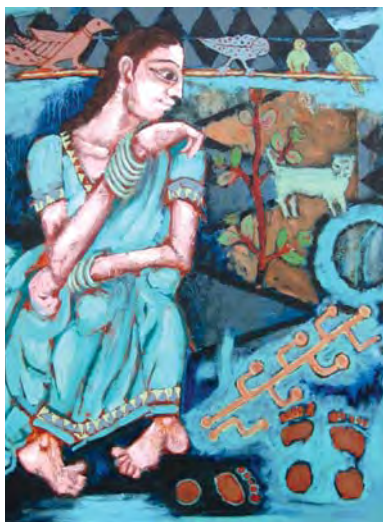
Romanov

PREMIUM VODKA

EVENTS



ORGANIC GINGER/ NATTI SUNTI, Siddhartha Art Gallery and the B.P Koirala India-Nepal Foundation present a performance art by Smitha Cariappa. 11 April onwards, 11am to 5pm, Babarmahal Revisited, Babarmahal



INVENTION IN TRADITION, an exhibition of paintings by Umesh Shah. 8 April to 23 April, 10.30 am to 5.30 pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 5522307

Finding the Story, be a part of Sattya's creative non-fiction writing workshop. Apply by April 20, April 23 to April 27, 11am to 3pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel

Placid Nuances, paintings on display by Neera Joshi Pradhan. 6 April to 19 April, Park Gallery, Lazimpat

Canvas City, explore street art as you experiment with stencils, wheatpasting and stickers at this art workshop. 14 April to 15 April, 11am to 3pm, Sattya media Arts Collective, Jhamsikhel

Learn Photography, learn the basics of photography in this 12 day long session. Rs 2999, 17 April to 28 April, 7am to 9.30am, 4244348, 9841240341

MUSIC



NEPFEST: BEGINNING OF THE END, this promotional gig of Decapitated features an array of bands like Amokkshan, Bidroha, Imperium and Scarlet Void. Rs 100, 28 April, 2pm onwards, Neon Pub, Thamel



SUFI NIGHT, Hamro Fellowship presents Hemant Rana performing for charity for Hospice Nepal. Rs 1000, 20 April, 7pm onwards, Patan Museum, Mangal Bazaar, For tickets contact 9802051400

SIGN, Live music by SIGN band every week except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 7:30 pm onwards, Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Call 4411818

New Year's Eve, catch Monkey Temple this New Year's Eve. 7pm onwards, 13 April, F4 Restaurant and Bar, Jhamsikhel

DINING

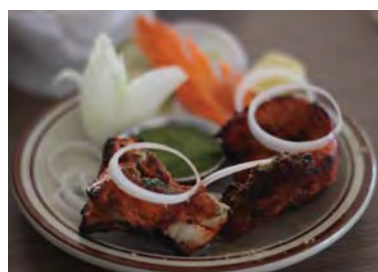


PASTO VOSTRO, a pretty place with some great pasta. Their bacon wrapped sausages are a must. Thamel



YELLOW CHILI, enjoy renowned chef Sanjeev Kapoor's dishes as this restaurant serves mouthwatering Indian delicacies. Thapathali

Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which get a big thumbs-up. Pulchowk, opposite Namaste Supermarket



TAMA, enjoy delicious khaja and taas set, and a host of other Indian and Nepali snacks at a reasonable price. Gairidhara

Singma Food Court, for the best Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine in town. Pulchowk, 5009092 and Bhatbhateni, 4411078



MILK COFFEE N COCKTAIL CAFE, coffee house during the day and a cosy lounge serving cocktails at night, try its yarchagumba and molecular cocktails. Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg

Chopstix, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. Kumaripati, 5551118

Bhojan Griha, traditional Nepali restaurant that serves great local food with folk music and dance. Dillibajar



HANKOOK SARANG, from Bibimbab to Samgyeopsal, Hankook offers a wide range of Korean delicacies at affordable prices. Thamel (opposite Road house café)



NEW ORLEANS, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. Get hooked on the rosemary chicken and hamburgers. Jhamsikhel, 5522708



THE FACTORY, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on the cheesecake, it's a must. Mandala Street, Thamel

Highway heading your way



After garnering critical acclaim at the Berlin Film Festival past February, Deepak Rauniyar's highly anticipated *Highway* will finally hit Nepali theatres on June 15.

Set against the backdrop of a banda, *Highway* weaves together five different stories in which all the

characters come together during an ill-fated bus ride from eastern Nepal to the capital.

However, making the film was quite a struggle itself. Rauniyar recounts, "We faced a lot of difficulties during production. We had to cope with fuel crisis and strikes. There were changes in

shooting locations at the last hour. And just as we were about to wrap up the shooting, we also had to deal with a budget shortage."

Fortunately producers Sameer M Dixit and Lonim P Dixit were able to bring on board Louverture Films, a New York-based production company which connected the film with an online funding site called kickstarter.com. *Highway* created history by raising Rs 2.7 million which covered all post production costs.

"The response was overwhelming and the involvement and encouragement of anonymous supporters gave us the courage to keep going," says Rauniyar.

Despite stiff challenges, the cast and crew are happy to have the backing of renowned technicians like Golden Globe winner Richard Horowitz who has composed the background score



and David Barker who edited the movie.

Rauniyar brims with confidence and says, "Highway will be a turning point for our film industry. It will encourage independent filmmakers to make movies with a difference and put Nepali cinema on the global map." 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer of Highway



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GHANGRI CAFÉ, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. *Pulchowk*



CAFE HESSED, for those with a sweet tooth, the cafe offers a delicious range of cupcakes and doughnuts. *Jhamsikhel*

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant & Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza with a superb view of Boudha stupa. *Boudha, 2130681*

G Café, spic and span with a palatable menu, this restaurant is definitely worth the visit. *Boudha*

Comfort Zone, expansive restobar with a decent range of cocktails and barbeque meats. *Thamel*

New Tushita Restaurant, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on their Penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. *Lazimpat, 44432957*



CAFEREENA, the extensive menu has something for everyone. Try their famous chips chilly. *Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg*

Dhaba, for an excellent range of North Indian delicacies, try their unbeatable Kashmiri Gosht. *Thapathali*

GETAWAYS



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Photokipa

Creative D Pvt. Ltd and the Kathmandu Photographers Association is bringing together photography enthusiasts for a 3 day long exposition. The fair will include exhibitions by various organisations, forums on photography and provide visitors a chance to interact with photography experts and stalls with the latest photography equipment. Apart from the expo, there will be other events listed below.



Homage to Homai, a lecture by photographer Satish Sharma followed by a screening of *Three Women and a Camera* by Sabeena Gadihoke. *13 April, 6pm, Nepal Tourism Board*

Photography- a Language to Address the World, a presentation by writer and photographer Frederic Lecloux. *14 April, 4pm, Nepal Tourism Board*

Contemporary Nepali Photography, an exhibition where young Nepali photographers display their latest works. *15 April, 4pm, Nepal Tourism Board*

13 April to 15 April, 11am to 7pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Hall



SOMEPLACE ELSE



After a nine-to-five shift there is nothing more sating than picking up a crusty loaf, a roast and a couple of cold ones for an affordable and effortless dinner. Luckily, La Rotisserie in Jawalakhel features a slow-cook horizontal spit oven that celebrates the 550-year

French tradition of revolving hens, and they're not at all bad. A whole chicken from the four-year establishment will fetch you Rs 495, while a half is half at Rs 250 and a leg, Rs 125. The succulent bird comes with a standard red hot sauce but no mayo or ketchup. If you opt

for a whole, ensure freshness and insist your choice of roast straight from the spit rod. Sides are sadly limited to french fries (Rs 75). A spicy cajan rice or even a baguette would be ideal. But if chicken is not your thing, go fish. The trout (Rs 395) comes whole,

seasoned and grilled. But beware, the fish at the time of review was more bony than usual and irritating to pick out. Take a knife and debone before serving. Tea sandwiches are also available at the counter for Rs 75 including ham and cheese, tuna and grilled chicken on white bread with crusts off. Crab sandwiches (Rs 110) were out of stock but promise a rare treat in the valley. The grilled duck was also done for the day but is not cheap (Rs 995). Imported and domestic beer for Rs 220 can be bought elsewhere. Ask for extra sauce and napkins, if you are on the run. Upstairs seating extends the shop's kitsch decor including a framed dueling pistol, chalet furniture and rustic signage with hunky-dory axioms. But the lighting is dismal, and the ambience, uninviting. La Rotisserie is best for takeout. **Marco Pollo** Skip the Bakery Cafe, just off the circle in Jawalakhel, across from the Australian Red Dingo,

La Rotisserie



True Grit



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Joel and Ethan Coen are the genius film-making brothers who have perfected the art of taking a genre, any genre, and subverting it to make their very own superlative versions. The brothers have been making masterpieces like *Blood Simple*, *Miller's Crossing*, *O Brother Where Art Thou*, and *No Country For Old Men* since the 1980s. In Hollywood they have the rare honour of being allowed "final cut" by their producers - this means that they have the unusual privilege of always approving the final version of their films - with no producer interference whatsoever. You'll never see a "Director's Cut" version of a Coen brother's film simply because each of their films turns out exactly as they want them to.

With *True Grit*, the 2010 remake of the 1969 version starring John Wayne, the brother's have taken yet another classic genre and put their unmistakeable stamp on it. Westerns are gritty, some people avoid this gun-slinging, fast talking genre altogether, but this version of *True Grit* ought to unmissable.

Starring Jeff Bridges as Rooster Cogburn, the one-eyed US Marshall who ends up shooting dead most of the criminals he pursues, Matt Damon as the slightly goofy, overly learned Texas Ranger LaBoeuf (pronounced LuhBeef), and the wonderful newcomer Hailee Steinfeld as the 14 year old Mattie Ross, the characters in themselves are a rare delight to watch. The story is simple enough, Mattie Ross hires Rooster Cogburn to hunt down Tom Chaney (Josh Brolin) who shot her father, stole his two gold pieces, and skipped town on a horse he stole from his murdered victim. Cogburn agrees, reluctantly,

to take on Mattie's case after she agrees to pay him a hundred dollars (fifty up front) for his services. Although a hyper-articulate and skilled negotiator, the 14 year old Mattie does not, however, manage to persuade Cogburn to take her along for the chase.

In an unforgettable sequence Mattie jumps on her plucky new pony "Blackie" and pursues Cogburn who has tricked her by setting out before daylight. He has crossed the river on a ferry and has paid off the ferryman to escort Mattie back to town. Furious and determined, Mattie plunges into the river and hangs on to Blackie's neck as the marvellous horse swims across the river. On the other side await a dour Cogburn and a livid LaBoeuf who has joined the former to pursue Chaney who he has been tracking since he murdered a senator (over a dog) in Texas. LaBoeuf spansks Mattie, Cogburn points his gun at LaBoeuf to make him stop, and thus begins an unforgettable adventure with three hilarious and unforgettable characters.

There are many, many charming aspects to this film, but perhaps the one that is the most pleasing is the excellent dialogue. Everyone speaks in full sentences, replete with rich, unusual words and some very original turns of phrase. When Mattie's gun, the one she got from her dead father, misfires she is captured by Chaney's gang and the following is the exchange between the pert Mattie and the ring-leader "Lucky" Ned Pepper:

Mattie Ross: If I had killed Chaney, I would not be in this fix; but my gun misfired.

Lucky Ned Pepper: [Chuckling] They will do it. It will embarrass you every time. Most girls like to play pretties, but you like guns do you?

Mattie Ross: I do not care a thing about guns, if I did, I would have one that worked.

In the end it's hard to say which of the three characters is the one who has the true "grit" from the title. Even if you don't like "Westerns", watch this one. It is truly worth-while just to see the unusual spectacle of a 14 year old girl track across the Wild Wild West with two crotchety, yet strangely loveable men in search of her father's killer.

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available in the writer's favourite DVD store: Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone # 014700092

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer



The Annapurna Sanctuary



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Cleanliness may be next to Godliness, but in a practical sense, cleanliness has attracted many trekkers to the Annapurna Sanctuary region. Of course the mountain ringed amphitheatre with a panoramic view of Annapurna 1 (26, 545 ft) and Machhapuchhre (22, 943 ft) among others helps entice visitors. But lately cleanliness has played an important part in attracting trekkers here.

In this trek along the Modhi Khola and its tributaries, many Gurung villages dot the landscape with large campsites and tea houses with clean bathrooms and adequate water supply. The contrast with Kathmandu is stunning. Many rhododendron and magnolia trees were in bloom with tiny gentians and primroses along the path. As you travelled from Ghandruk (6,600ft), to Chomrong (7200 ft) to Dhobhan (8350 ft) and beyond to the Sanctuary

gates of the Machhapuchhre Base Camp (12,150 ft), the spick and span presentation was hard to believe. A few years ago this trekking route had dirty bathrooms with toilet paper strewn across in many areas of the trail. But the entire area has undergone dramatic changes.

This cleanliness has probably led to less infectious diseases among both locals and



visitors. There wasn't a single case of gastroenteritis, which was once a common problem. Even porters along the trail were brushing their teeth, something I had not seen in many years of trekking.

Most tea shop owners have tried to cooperate with one another to look clean and presentable by picking up paper along the trail and collecting

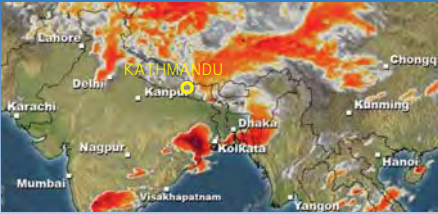
cans and bottles at designated sites. Anti-pollution measures have been enforced. From Chomrong onwards it is not possible to buy mineral water because plastic water bottles pollute and are unsightly. Impressively, it was not possible to bribe someone for mineral water. This is probably one of the few places in Nepal where there is no selective application of the law. Ozone-treated drinking water is often available for those who do not wish to carry iodine tablets or drink boiled water for water purification.

However even along this trek, it was noteworthy to see how the tobacco industry relentlessly pursuing its cigarette sales campaign. A pack of Marlboro cigarettes which costs twelve dollars in New York is sold for two dollars here. Villagers smoking cigarettes (any brand) and cooking their meals in open hearths without a chimney will clearly suffer from more lung diseases.

But remember to take elastic bandages and ibuprofen for sprains and strains along this undulating, magnificent, stair-cased trail.

WEEKEND WEATHER

The westerly front that brought water vapors into the Himalaya condensed with convection and brought the entire quarter of April precipitation in one week across Nepal. Linger moisture will trigger localised storms especially in the high mountains over the weekend. The rain having washed away the sand haze will make sunlight more intense and raise maximum temperatures.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
25-12	24-13	23-10



BIKASH DUWARE

FAMILY AFFAIR: PM Baburam Bhattarai, daughter Manushi and wife Hisila Yami (left to right) join the cleaning campaign on the banks of the Bagmati on Thursday morning.



WALLACE WOON

HEAVENLY ABODE: Locals securing the ropes around the base of the Rato Macchendra Nath chariot along Pulchowk on Tuesday.



BIKRAM RAI

OUT LOUD: Maoist leader Ram Bahadur Thapa speaks at the end of a torch rally, organised by the hardliner faction of the party in protest of the decision to deploy Nepal Army in PLA cantonments on Wednesday in Kathmandu.



KRISHNA SINJALI

FINISHING TOUCH: A Tibetan carpet weaver in Olangchung Gola, a village in Taplejung, adds finishing touches to complete his creation, last Thursday.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

JUMLA — After the Maoist camps and containers were emptied this week, the next step is the integration of former guerrillas into the Nepal Army. The parallel military structure that had existed uneasily through the peace process is now gone.

Nearly six years after signing the Comprehensive Peace Accord, the UCPN-M is now a civilian party. The Maoists, NC and UML have agreed on the numbers, ranks and the norms of the integration process, something that had bedeviled them in the past. Disagreements over the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on Disappearances have also seemingly been resolved at the political level and the technical nitty-gritties need to be sorted out through side negotiations. Now, the political parties do not have any more excuses or distractions from completing the constitution.

Of late, the NC and UML have been insisting on the



Here in Nepal's remote outback, federalism holds the promise of making government more accessible and accountable

'completion of peace process' for statute drafting to kick off. The parties seem to forget that the peace process does not end with induction of the combatants, and the establishment of the committees. The real integration at the societal level will only begin when the final pages of the constitution are written.

Travelling along the banks of the Karnali river from Kalikot to Jumla this week, I could sense seething resentment among the public, not just towards one party but the entire state machinery. The penetration of television and radio have kept people updated with what their leaders do, or don't do,

in faraway Kathmandu. At a gathering in Jumla, people hurled angry questions at visiting Tourism Minister Lokendra Bista Magar and demanded to know what was taking the parties so long to finalise the constitution. They were especially displeased that foot-dragging on federalism was prolonging the integration of the long-neglected Karnali into the country's development mainstream.

The region has been neglected and abandoned by successive rulers in the capital. Most health and education indicators of Karnali are way below the national average.

People here do not have the luxury of patience. "We want a constitution and federalism ensured so that the government comes closer to us and we do not have to travel for days with a delegation to ask them to do what we are already paying them for with our hard earned money," fumes Jagat Bahadur Khatri, a retired school teacher. It has been three months since the beginning of the new session and schools in Jumla and Kalikot still haven't got their supply of text books.

The fear of going back to the status quo of an over-centralised state and the danger of ethnic fragmentation

have dominated the debate on federalism. But in Nepal's remote outback, federalism holds the promise of making government more accessible and accountable. The parties should grow up and get over their quarrel about whose agenda federalism is. Federalism is not the brainchild of any one party, but a demand that stems from the systemic marginalisation by rulers in Kathmandu.

With a little over a month remaining for the CA deadline, the completion of the peace process may have come late but not too late to finalise the draft of the new constitution. Both the Madhesi morcha and Maoists have shown willingness to openly debate the nature of the constitution that best accommodates everybody's demands. This is a welcome step and the parties must not let this spirit wane.

Keeping the anarchist tradition alive, the Maoist hardliners have taken to the streets. This is at best only a nuisance and not a major obstruction. No matter which side of the political spectrum they stand on, there isn't much difference between Kamal Thapa's politics and that of Mohan Baidya and Co. But they neither have the attention of the mainstream parties nor the people. 🇳🇵

Future for a forgotten district

Contending with a tormented past, Kalikot works to reinvent itself



PICS: ANURAG ACHARYA

Bilaspora BK and Kali Pariyar rise every morning, and equipped with a scale they go from house-to-house weighing newborns in the village of Daha. They advise pregnant and nursing mothers about nutrition and immunisation.

This systematic approach to healthcare in Kalikot is transforming

this once-neglected and remote district. Until recently, many families in Kalikot were severely malnourished. Infant and maternal mortality rates were at sub-Saharan levels, and the district's mean life expectancy was only 46, compared to the national average of 63.

During the war, thousands of impoverished villagers from Kalikot



walked for days to the Indian border to flee the fighting and find jobs. Locals remember how the Indian border guards harassed them, saying they were aiding Indian Maoists. Those who migrated faced ruthless exploitation. Many were cheated and cruelly exploited.

With peace, fewer people migrate. And the government's investment in health and nutrition programs is improving the living standards in Kalikot. Under-five child and maternal mortality rates have dropped. With UNICEF, the government has implemented its Decentralised Action for Children and Women (DACAW) in 23 districts including Kalikot.

Social mobiliser Kali says the main reason for the improvements is the presence of a health clinic in her village, but she says there are still huge challenges. "The district still has high incidences of uterine prolapse and malnutrition among

young mothers," she says, "they are made to work too hard at home and in the fields and do not get nutritious food, which also affects the health of their babies."

In this arid and chronically food-deficit district, there are also shortages of safe drinking water and firewood. Says Mandara BK, 60: "We risk our lives collecting firewood. If you survive, you bring home a stack of wood, if you fall off those cliffs they will use the same wood in your funeral pyre." The onset of the peace process and construction of the Karnali highway have given residents hope about the future. With better access to markets, farmers are earning income from apples, mushrooms, herbs and tea.

"The dry weather and rocky mountains may be unsuitable for growing rice but they are not unproductive," says agriculture expert Chuman Singh Giri, who believes Kalikot has the potential for organic produce. Irrigation schemes and rainwater harvesting could reduce farmers' dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Kalikot could also develop into a trekking and rafting spot along the scenic Karnali Valley, but for that the infrastructure has to improve.

For the first time anyone here can remember in this powerless district once battling for survival, the dreams of inhabitants have expanded beyond the desire to escape starvation. 🇳🇵

Anurag Acharya in Kalikot

We still want to live

The government spent \$20 million in 2010 for HIV response, but not much of it got to the village of Rakam

NARESH NEWAR in DAILEKH



Mansara Sijapati smiles as she poses for a photograph, but then breaks down and cries when she tells her story.

Four years ago, her husband killed himself after strangling their three-year-old when he found out they both had HIV. Mansara was kicked out by her

husband's family and even her own mother refused to take her in.

"But I still want to live," says the 31-year old Mansara even though she is landless and homeless. Her brother-in-law has given her refuge, but she can't even afford food or pay for visits to Surkhet for her CD4 count to

measure her immune strength.

According to the District Health Office (DHO) there are 185 people, mostly widows and children, living with HIV in Dailekh. A majority of them are here in the village of Rakam, but they get no help from the government. Their only hope is a local group called Parivartan

Ko Lagi Pahuch (Access for Change) which distributes antiretroviral drugs once every two months.

There are only two voluntary counseling and testing centres in Dullu Bajar and Chukla, both several days walk far away from remote VDCs with high HIV rates like Rakam. But even these two

centres have neither the budget nor the support to take care of the epidemic in Dailekh.

"After detection we worry about breaking the news to them, and we try our best to console them," says Sushil Bikram Thapa from the Nepal STD and AIDS Research Centre (NSARC). There are many cases



That time of

RUBEENA D SHRESTHA in ACHHAM



PICS: RUBEENA D SHRESTHA

Old traditions that banish women to outhouses during their periods die hard in mid-western Nepal despite literacy and affluence

For four days every month many women in Achham move out of their houses into tiny sheds because they are deemed unclean, the gods will be angered and bring ruin upon hapless male members of the family, crops will wither and die, cows will stop giving milk.

The tradition of 'chaupadi' stems from ignorance and superstition, and requires married women to be banished to the cowshed for four days and unmarried women for seven days every month during their periods. Mothers and their newborn babies, too, have to go to the cowshed.

Ousted from their homes, the women have little access to clean water, face dangers from snakes and wild animals attracted by the scent of blood, are prone to physical assault, violence and even rape. Living in such unhygienic conditions exposes them to infections and disease.

The narrow, squat little outhouses are



EXCOMMUNICATED: Such is the hold of tradition and superstition that Achham women still willingly banish themselves to outhouses during their monthly periods.



PICS: NARESH NEWAR

of suicides after being detected with the virus, and there is a dire need for new centres in the district.

“We are desperate for help, please help us communicate this message urgently to the central government and the UN,” says Gehraj Khanal, chief of Rakam Karnali Sub-Health

Beyond news

Suraj is just 12 years old. Ravi is eight and Siva is 13. They are all HIV positive orphans living in Rakam who lost their parents to full blown AIDS. Ravi asked visitors: “Are you here to help us?”

Such questions are always inevitable, and journalists are often at a loss on how to respond to them. We parachute into villages, interview a few people and head back to the city with ‘exclusive’ interviews and ‘quotes’. We gather news, write reports and inform the public, and move on to the next story. But is that enough? Isn’t there a higher calling?

Shouldn’t journalists make sure that the responsible people, in this case, aid agencies and government, are held accountable and pressured to take action? In other words, is awareness enough? Shouldn’t there also be action?

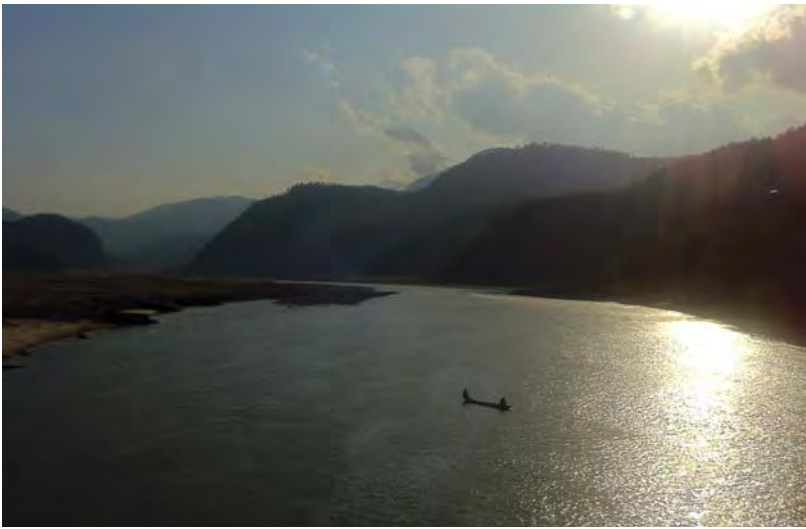
If reporters do that, they are said to have crossed the line into activism, or

called ‘NGO journalist’. But in places like the rugged, impoverished mountains of mid-western Nepal, journalists have a job not just to collect and disseminate information, but also to follow-up with the authorities in Kathmandu. Bearing witness to suffering is not enough when there is so much indifference around.

In Dailekh, officials at the DDC and the DHO blame apathy in Kathmandu to the AIDS epidemic here. We took that to the officials in Kathmandu. The UN and NCASC admitted frankly that they lacked information about the situation in Dailekh and promised to investigate. Let’s hope that happens soon.

Here in Kathmandu, the faces of HIV widows and orphans appear to urge action, forcing me to ask myself: “What have I done to alleviate their plight?” One thing is sure, writing about it is not enough anymore.

Naresh Newar



MIDDLE OF NOWHERE (left to right): The village of Rakam in Dailekh which has been ravaged by AIDS. Mansara Sijapati tells the story of a husband who committed suicide after strangling his HIV-positive daughter. The scenic beauty of a Karnali sunset masks the suffering of this neglected land.

because people feel there is no point in getting tested. The NCASC’s Hemant Chandra Ojha agrees that Dailekh needs serious and urgent attention, and has been hampered by the lack of strong advocacy from the district’s aid coordination committee. The government spent \$20 million in 2010 for its HIV response, but it doesn’t look like much of it got to Rakam.

In Kathmandu, UNAIDS country chief Maria Elena Filio-Borromeo is also surprised about why Dailekh falls between the cracks. “It’s amazing that there is big money but it is not going to a place like Rakam, we need to look at why this is happening,” she told *Nepali Times*. 🇳🇵

Post, who is the only health official in the VDC. “It is not the disease that is killing patients, but the mental stress and poor nutrition.”

Mid-western Nepal is an AIDS hotspot mainly because infected male migrant workers spread the virus on returning from India infecting, wives and new-born babies. The high-risk group in Nepal’s concentrated

HIV epidemic is now no longer injecting drug users but the male labour migrants.

“I don’t understand why international aid agencies and the National Centre for HIVAIDS and STD Control have abandoned these people, at least they could help the children,” says Deepa Bohara, an activist with Parivartan Ko Lagi Pahuch. So far, the NCASC provides

only Rs 200,000 per year to support all people living with HIV and AIDS in Dailekh, but care and treatment for each person costs at least Rs 25,000 annually. There is also a crucial need to support HIV positive children and orphans who need help with nutrition and education.

“We are very disappointed and frustrated with the people running the Global Fund who have totally abandoned this district,” says Dailekh’s Local Development Officer, Dil Bahadur Shahi.

Khagendra Jung Shah of Dailekh Hospital says the lack of state support is dangerous

nepalitimes.com 🖱️

An epidemic of stigma and discrimination #592
“They don’t get rich, they get HIV” # 353

the month

dank and windowless. If a family doesn’t have a chaupadi shed, neighbourhood women share a common cowshed sometimes with up to 15 women packed like sardines inside.

Mathura Kami, now 40, was first sent to the shed at 11 when she got her first periods and had to stay there for seven days. “I was so scared and didn’t know what was happening,” she recalls, “I would go for days without food because they would just forget about me. I now have my own daughters and I do not send them to the sheds and have them sleep in a little room inside the house itself.”

Considering a woman to be unclean when she is on her periods is not limited to Achham, it is endemic among many Hindu families in Nepal, and even educated and wealthy women aren’t allowed to enter the kitchen, visit temples or touch male members of the family.

“To end chaupadi, women need a secure environment. But till there is a change of belief, till menstruation is



not considered to be a normal, natural, biological phenomenon, this practice is going to continue,” says women’s rights activist, Manju Thapa.

This is starting to happen. In the district capital Mangalsen many women have stopped going to sheds once a month not because of awareness, but due to growing affluence from remittances. More money means better houses with more rooms, and so there is space inside the house for that time of the month.

“Now some families have enough money to build separate rooms so the female folk do not have to go to the goth, the biggest problem is still poverty,” says Ambika Chalaune, a young local politician.

Women are still isolated once a month, but at least they are not sent off to the outhouse. Traditions change, but not always for the better, since women who used to at least have four days of rest once a month now have to work in the fields, gather grass for the cattle, break

“I will not risk it”

Radha Nepali Pariyar is a single mother who has come back to live at her father’s house ever since her husband abandoned her for a younger woman. She had just returned from a day breaking stones and working in the fields. Her father’s house is among the better ones in the village and the shed lies in his property. She shows us the separate utensils which she has to use during her periods.

“My father works as a guard at the bank and has a steady income. He built this nice new house with many rooms and welcomed my son and me back,” she tells us, “he is also a Christian and does not believe in chaupadi anymore and tells me to stay in the house itself. But I cannot. What if I touch something and something bad happens? Who will take responsibility? I will not risk it.”

The group of women who have gathered around all nod and agree with Radha.



stones and collect firewood all day before retiring to the shed in the evening.

“If I can feed the cow when having my periods, why can’t I drink its milk? If I can collect firewood for the kitchen, why can’t I cook? If I touch a plant, it will die they say, then why am allowed to breast-feed in the chaupadi?” asks Chalaune.

Growing literacy is spreading awareness, but old traditions die hard. Chaupadi has become one of those

easy buzzwords for NGOs to conduct awareness programs, and distribute allowances to participants. But local activists say many women who are ‘made aware’ go back to being banished to their sheds every month. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com 🖱️

Custom-made injustice #247

Filthy business

Mysansar.com, 8 April

Residents of Kathmandu were in for a surprise on Friday as Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, ministers, police and army officials stepped out on the streets with brooms in their hands to launch the ambitious National Volunteer Campaign. However, delight quickly turned into frustration when discrepancies in the campaign budget were discovered. While the proposed budget for the week long program is Rs 20 million, deeper inspection reveals that materials for the campaign were purchased at much higher prices than their actual market rate. For instance, each mask cost Rs 35 and each pair gloves was priced at Rs 50.

SEE BUDGET:

S.N	Description	Quantity	Rate	Total	Remarks
1.1	Cleaning utilities	20000		20,00,000	Kathmandu Metropolitan City
1.2	Masks	50000	35	17,50,000	Nepal Government
1.3	Gloves	50000	50	25,00,000	Nepal Government
1.4	Pamphlets	350000	1.50	5,25,000	Nepal Government
1.5	Plastic bag free campaign			10,00,000	Nepal Government
1.6	Cloth bag	100000	50	50,00,000	Nepal Government
1.7	Production/broadcast/ publication of media messages			10,000,000	Nepal Government
1.8	Volunteer mobilisation expense			56,25,000	Nepal Government
1.9	Transportation management and fuel				Kathmandu Metropolitan City
	Total			1,94,00,000	
	Nepal Government			1,74,00,000	
	Kathmandu Metropolitan City			20,00,0000	

People won't question the 20 million if they see visible differences in Kathmandu's sanitary standards. But if the campaign fails then each penny spent will be highly scrutinised. Also a week long cleaning spree is not the long term solution to the city's problem. So the government should focus its attention on raising awareness and giving continuity to successful efforts such as fining those who litter public places.

“India’s Nepal policy has not been without flaws.”

Interview with SD Muni, Indian Professor and expert in South Asian politics, Kantipur, 8 April

कान्तिपुर



Kantipur: What is your assessment of the ongoing peace and constitution writing process?

SD Muni: I am optimistic this time because the UCPN (Maoist) has taken an official decision to conclude the peace process. Young CA members are pressurising the leadership and the

Supreme Court has ruled out any further extension of the CA term leaving no other option than to conclude the process within the deadline.

There is a general refrain about profound Indian influence in Nepali politics? Do you agree?

No, I don't think this is the case. Anti-Indian rhetoric has become fashionable in Nepal these days. All I want to say is that as long as Nepali leaders take care of their affairs and do not dash off to Delhi with every little problem, nobody can influence their decisions.

The Indian government has been increasingly troubled by its own Maoist insurgency. Do you see any connection between Indian and Nepali Maoists?

I don't believe there is any organisational contact between the two parties, although there may be personal links between some members.

How would you explain the Indian government's refusal to send the agreemo for Ram Karki (and Chandrakant Poudel in the past) who had been nominated as the Nepali Ambassador to India?

The Indian government must have been worried about the legal complications involving Karki's case due to his past ties with Indian Naxalites. But I personally feel his agreemo should be cleared.

What do you feel is the basis of India's Nepal policy?

People here think India's foreign ministry dictates the Nepal policy. What they don't realise is that right from the Prime Minister's office, there are many other influential groups lobbying in Nepal's favour. For instance, during the economic blockade enforced by Rajiv Gandhi's government, people like Sankaracharya, the Army Chief, business community, powerful people in Bihar and UP and many leaders in the ruling Congress party pressurised the state to lift the blockade. Often, bureaucrats sitting in the ministry make wrong calls and reporting from the embassies is not always accurate either.



Elephant: May 27

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in Annapurna Post, 6 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ We must not allow the parties to shy away from federalism based on identity, directly elected president and inclusive proportional representation. ”

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, UCPN-M Chairman.

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Boycott politicians

Ramchandra Baral, *Aarsee Times*, 9 April

आरसी टाइम्स

While only a few weeks remaining for the CA deadline to expire, the progress so far has been disappointing. People are outraged at CA members and politicians for not delivering on their promises and pushing the country to uncertainty. Instead of speeding up the constitution writing process, our politicians were embroiled in one controversy after another and their reputation has been badly tarnished. If this trend continues, people are bound to get angrier and will become completely disillusioned with the present political system.

Civil society and the media have to play a more active role in pressurising the politicians to fulfil their duties and a wide-scale campaign spearheaded by the media is the need of the day.

Let's stop inviting CA members and politicians to unnecessary programs and giving them platforms to fool the public. Let's keep them out of the headlines and front pages. Let's hold them accountable to the promises they make through the media. Let's stop publicising any businesses or enterprises that politicians are involved in until they draft the constitution. Unless these steps are taken, politicians are not going to clean their acts.

Hurry Hurry!

Kiran Bhandari in *Nagarik*, 12 April

नागरिक

After the major breakthrough in the peace process, UCPN Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal invited journalists to his residence in Lajimpat. An elated Dahal briefed the editors and reporters about the 'bold' decision he took by successfully completing the integration process and said he would play a similar role in completing the statute drafting also.



Throughout the press meet Dahal seemed in a great hurry and kept looking at his watch. Reportedly, PM Bhattarai was constantly calling Dahal from the special committee meeting. After half an hour Dahal, left his residence in a hurry but to the surprise of the journalists who were still being served refreshments, in came Indian Ambassador Jayant Prasad followed by former NC lawmaker Amresh Kumar Singh.

Not surprisingly, Dahal was back at Lajimpat leaving Bhattarai and the special committee stranded. After being told about the Indian Ambassador's unannounced visit, PM Bhattarai stopped calling and Dahal paid full attention to Prasad.

Visionary hospital


Editorial in *Nagarik*, 9 April

नागरिक

Tilganga Eye Centre recently introduced laser technology for eye operations in Nepal. People with poor eyesight can opt to undergo this surgery and do away with their glasses. While the operation costs around Rs 200,000 to Rs 800,000 in other countries, Tilganga offers the service for only Rs 45,000. Officials at the hospital are hopeful that the affordable fee will help attract patients from foreign countries as well.

Unlike other non-governmental organisations in Nepal which function as fronts for dollar hoarding, Tilganga is not

only one of the best eye-care hospitals in Nepal, but it has earned acclaim both at home and abroad. In 2006 Dr Sanduk Ruit of Tilganga was presented the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for taking ophthalmologic services to remote areas of Nepal. Now that the centre has laid the foundation, our government along with other social organisations need to ensure that people who cannot physically visit the hospital still have access to the services. Private hospitals should also take lessons from Tilganga and stop focusing solely on profit maximisation and become more service orientated. We congratulate Tilganga team for making a great contribution to Nepal's healthcare system and for taking on a pioneering initiative.



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Taking to the streets



PICS: AMRIT GURUNG

Baburam (“Demolition Man”) Bhattarai is doing what he did best during the war: destroy buildings, blow up bridges, reduce neighbourhoods to rubble. Old habits die hard, which is why he finds re-building the streets he has demolished a much more difficult proposition. Having taken to the streets, BRB is looking like a reincarnation of Napoleon III who razed the old quarter of Paris to build the wide boulevards so as to foil any barricade protests. And just like Napoleon got Baron Hausmann to do the dirty work, the PM has got his own better half, Comrade Yummy to take charge of making KTM look like a war zone. The bonus, of course, is that the demolition work is keeping a lot of YCL busy and out of trouble, which is not entirely a bad thing because it is better that they are wielding picks and shovels than .303s and socket bombs. Over at the municipality, they have lost track of how much money

has been spent on tearing down buildings so far, and all this flattening is being carried out by none other than communards under the conjugal leadership of **Comrade Hatoda and Hasiya.**



It doesn't bode well for the country that New Year 2069 falls on Friday the 13th. And a conference of astrologers this week predicted that because of the confluence of **Jupiter** and **Saturn**, the planets are not quite aligned yet for the promulgation of the new constitution. They have advised waiting till May 1, but to avoid the 27 May deadline because that whole week is completely inauspicious.



It looks the US and European visa bans are not a deterrence anymore for bund organisers. The blacklisted hired goons know they are not getting B-2 visas to the states anyway, so they figure they may as well indulge in **toadfod, dhungamuda and kutpit**

to enforce strikes. Muscles-for-hire have plenty of employment opportunities as there is a string of bunds scheduled for the coming month. If the Ass may just make a humble suggestion, instead of this piecemeal approach it would save all of us a lot of aggravation if they all got together and closed the country down and declared it officially out of bounds till 27 May.



This is probably the first time in global aviation history that a Minister of Civil Aviation has hijacked an airliner. Lokendra (“**Comrade Schengen**”) Bista Magar commandeered a plane being readied for a flight to Phaplu to take himself and his boss Comrade Awesome on a hoppig flight across western Nepal this week. The guy is eligible to get immortalised in the Guinness Book of World Records, and we are waiting for the director of *Loot* to turn this into a movie. And when the media reported on the

hijacking, Minister Loktantra first accused his detractors of being part of a “Bahun conspiracy against Janajatis” and then threatened to sack staff at Nepal Airlines and his own ministry for leaking the information. This is probably a preview of how a future Chief Minister of an ethnic federal province with priority rights is going to behave.



On Wednesday, Comrade Magnifico invited selected editors to his Lazimpat villa to thump his chest about what a “bold and courageous” step he had taken to send the army in to take over the Baddie camps. The irony of it all seems to have been lost on the man. PKD was trying to beat BRB's address to the nation on Thursday and hog all the credit for concluding the peace process. Awesome's main message was that he wants to be a directly-elected president, otherwise there will

be no new constitution. Throughout the brief briefing, the Chairman was twitching more nervously than usual and glancing at his watch. Apparently he was late for a Special Committee meeting. Soon after he left, assembled editors were treated to a series of dramatic comings and goings. Who should sweep into the driveway but Excellency Jayant closely escorted by shadow Minister Amareso. Soon after, the Chairman returned. Obviously the “urgent” Special Committee meeting wasn't as urgent as the urgent meeting with South Centre.



What a coincidence: integration got a jump start after the visit of the Indian Army chief and his meaningful public statement “not to mess around” with the army. Barely had Gen VK Singh's Embraer taken off than our own COAS also started singing a different tune on integration.



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