



The Power to Surprise™

GIVE AND TAKE

Nepal's public sphere is so politically top-heavy, the media narrative so dominated by minute-to-minute coverage of day-to-day politics, the public debate so obsessed with hush-hush give-and-take between rulers, that it overshadows everything else.

Politics gets reduced to its lowest common denominator of power and greed. Clever party spokesmen spin the media for advantage in negotiations. Reporters readily fall into the trap, such is the urge for the scoop or pithy soundbite. Politicians who shout the loudest and have the most extreme slogans grab the headlines. This polarizes positions and makes negotiations more difficult.

The real story in the coming weeks is not whether a new draft constitution is written or not, but whether in the process of give-and-take in Hatiban or Dhulikhel or some other resort, it will preserve national unity and democracy. Will our new federal structure lay the groundwork to reduce poverty, or will the citizens of future provinces be even more marginalised and discriminated against? Will it help nurture sustainable peace, or lead to inter-ethnic strife over territory? Will the king of government lead to representative democracy from the grassroots up, or pave the way for an authoritarian president-for-life?

It is perilous that the most critical and sensitive elements of the new constitution are being left for the last four weeks of political bartering. They had four years to examine the reports of demographers, resource economists, political scientists and geographers about the



BIKRAM RAI

In a country that is already the poorest in Asia, politics must be about finding the shortest path to the largest public good: raising income and equalising opportunity.

political and economic viability of future federal units, we had a representative assembly of 601 elected members to do the job, but in the end it looks like 22 men behind closed doors are going to carve up the country into little pieces.

In a country that is already the poorest in Asia, politics must be about finding the shortest path to the largest public good: raising income and equalising opportunity. But clauses in the new constitution have become bargaining chips for future power sharing between the main parties.

The only silver lining is that our country has already

hit rock bottom, so there is nowhere to go but up. It has been six years since we stopped killing each other and the peace process is somewhat on track and the finality of the 27 May deadline seems to have sunk in.

From what we hear from selective leaks, the parties are about to trade Maoist flexibility on ethnic federalism for UML-NC flexibility on a directly-elected presidential system. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has not tried to hide that he wants to be an all-powerful president, for which he is ready to trade anything: his former guerrillas, identity-based federalism, future judicial system, or citizenship norms. Politicians, by definition, want to get to

power and stay there. But can we afford, at this late date, to let two dozen men sit in a dark room and tailor-make a take-it-or-leave-it constitution suited for just one man's ambition?

The bottom line should be a constitution that can best guarantee stability and lay the foundation for a democratic state that can ensure long-term development. The new provinces should be designed to ensure viable economies, and a balanced distribution of natural resources. We shouldn't get bogged down in haggling over the names and territorial boundaries of future federal units. This is not just our point of view, but the considered opinions of independent experts we have carried in these pages over the last three years of the constitution debate.

The goal of the new constitution is to make everyone better off, not to keep us mired in poverty and authoritarianism.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

600 TIMES

Congratulations to *Nepali Times* team and Kunda Dixit for completing the milestone 600th edition. Thank you columnists for informing, educating and entertaining us for the past 12 years. I remember reading NT for the first time in 2002. It was the #105 edition which I still have with me till this day. Although it was hard to get hold of NT when I was in Dang, I am happy I can now read the entire paper online. What I appreciate the most about NT is that it never flatters politicians or leaders, it is about us the people, and highlights stories of ordinary Nepalis in the hinterland who have shown tremendous patience, courage, and integrity even during the most difficult period in our history. It also provides a critical forum for readers to express their grievances, viewpoints and discuss current affairs. As an English teacher, I can also say that NT's elegant and well-written articles have helped many like me improve our English language skills. Keep up the excellent work.

Ram Hari Rijal, Dang

- It is customary these days to only write to the editor if you have a major disagreement with an article, and usually the criticism is personal and vitriolic. Well, I am writing to thank you for bringing out a world-class journal week in and week out for the past 12 years. *Nepali Times* is a staple for me, I like its positive tone even when it discusses Nepal's problems and injustices. It is not cynical, but spreads hope and regularly profiles ordinary Nepalis who have overcome overwhelming odds.

Jan Peterson, Sanepa

- Your editorial ('The writing on the wall') reprinted from 2004 left me depressed. If there was no blurb on top, this could have been written in April 2012. Our country is in the exact same position as it was eight years ago: people are disillusioned with democracy, there is no rule of law, every party is working for its own selfish motives, and old kings have been replaced by new kings. If we let this madness go on, NT can repeat this editorial in 2020 again and the situation might still be the same. Some of these articles are as relevant to Naya Nepal as they were to Purano Nepal. They show us how far we have come since the days of the insurgency in 2000 but how much progress still needs to be done. We seem to be repeating mistakes of the past and the Maoists are as slippery and hard to pin down as they were 10 years ago.

Nepali Cheli

HERE I AM

Bhattarai has turned out to be a bigger fraud than Dahal ('Here I am', #600). He created problems in the peace process when Dahal, Nepal and Khanal were in office and now he wants to take all the credit? Until our politicians stop pulling each other's legs there won't be any real progress in the country. But looking at current trends, I am highly doubtful our leaders will give up their good old ways anytime soon.

Who cares

WANT TO LIVE

Thank you *Nepali Times* for dedicating two full pages to HIV and AIDS awareness ('We still want to live', Naresh Newar, #600). It speaks volume about your paper's strong commitment to bring out development and social issues and hopefully generate the needed action on time. Newar's article

clearly puts a Nepali woman's face to the HIV epidemic in far flung villages like Rakam in Dailekh, where HIV/AIDS services are very limited. It also urges journalists to engage more actively and meaningfully in educating society about HIV/AIDS, to go "beyond news" and make a real difference in the lives of HIV positive Nepali women.

Marlyn F Borromeo

OLD AND NEW

Nepali lawmakers and leaders do not have to face accountability because they make easy fortunes and the rest of the country can go to you know where ('New Year's Resolutions', Paavan Mathema, #600). This old generation of fools can never lead Nepal into the Information Age. Their ideas are old, they are lazy and corrupt, and encouraged by impunity. A new generation of educated Nepalis have to come forward to replace them and put the economy at the forefront.

Tri Ratna Manandhar

FEDERALISM

I want a directly elected head of government ('Federalism by any other name', editorial, #599). How long do we vote for kingmakers and not the kings themselves? The people must relieve the legislature of its regime forming duties. Otherwise our neurotic leaders will forever be occupied with it.

Chaite

- So let me get this straight, all this killing, chaos, war and destruction was just so that our dear leaders could endorse a half-baked document which is hollow to its core? And this uproar about the constitution seems even more ridiculous when we realise that the most sincere demand is to come up with just any document. No proper constitution, no debate, no procedures, just anything

that will pass off as a constitution. Just hit the print key, get the CA representatives who could be substituted by auto-bots to say 'aye' and that's it?

Soni

- Kunda Dixit needs to give credit where it belongs. I am not a big fan of outdated communist ideology, but we must acknowledge the accomplishments of Bhattarai's government, especially when they are so rare: integrating the ex-combatants, decommissioning the cantonments, firing two corrupt ministers, jailing two corrupt ministers and a police chief, setting up the West Seti project, and signing a bilateral business treaty with India. Next on Bhattarai's to-do list: establishing a sensible federal structure, creating a new constitution and dismantling YCL thugs.

Sudha

- Your editorial made a mistake by focusing on a person rather than the institution. Instead of preparing a list of people, we should concentrate on designing necessary institutions. This also includes a strong investigative body which is not afraid to send a corrupt to jail. If we go for a presidential system, we need to make sure that there is a term limit. If we go for a parliamentary system, we need to ensure that the government cannot be changed on a whim.

Suman

CLOSET

This is a wonderful article by Anurag Acharya ('Cleaning out the closet', #599). Acharya at least dares to question the Nepal Army and Police that the media portrays as great rescuers of Nepalis and protectors of democracy. But I am still doubtful that the parties and security forces will allow commissions

that will question their very credibility to be established.

Binu

- There is no doubt that the police and army committed excesses during the war, but it doesn't absolve the crimes of the Maoists who also killed thousands of ordinary Nepalis. It is the selective memory of supporters on both sides which is hindering truth, justice and reconciliation.

Kiran L

- We can only hope that those who have claimed the right to govern will finally govern Nepal in a manner the people deserve. We often expect more from politicians than we should, whether it is Obama in the US or Bhattarai in Nepal. Now it remains to be seen if the prime minister will work towards creating a new Nepal with a truly democratic constitution and transparent government or if he will rely on tried and true methods of his predecessors and maintain a political structure which is rotten to the core with egoism and corruption.

Mark Edward Croy

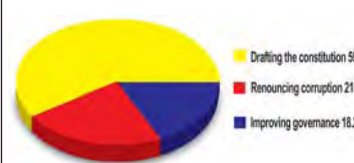
Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #601

Q. A New Year's resolution for Nepal's leaders should be:

Total votes: 1,061



Weekly Internet Poll # 602. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. The debate on Constitutional Court should pave way for:

Journalism of deception

The power that comes with being a journalist in this city has led most to think that they can get away with anything



THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

Two weeks ago news came of a death of a journalist in Jhapa. The cause of the death was not immediately known but the Jhapa Chapter of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists quickly concluded that the murder of Yadav Poudel was linked to a story on prostitution he had covered.

In Kathmandu and across the country there were angry protests. Journalists, media houses and facebookers condemned the killing as a cruel blow to press freedom and demanded stern action against the perpetrator(s). The prime minister, not to be left behind, pledged immediate action and said that the murder of a journalist was an attack on democracy and human rights.

Preliminary police investigation, however, ruled out Poudel's profession as the cause of his death. Apparently inebriated, Poudel had embraced the wife of the hotel owner and Yubaraj Giri, the would-be publisher of his paper who was also drunk, had pushed Poudel from the hotel rooftop in the ensuing scuffle. Intriguingly, Poudel's story on the prostitution racket run by Som Dhakal and his wife Manju happened in the same hotel from where he fell to his death, raising suspicion about the owners' involvement.

Many journalists suffer attacks because of what they write. This week, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked Nepal number six among countries where killers of journalists are

not prosecuted. But every other scuffle in a bar, tea-house or local watering hole that involves a journalist is not necessarily a blow to press freedom.

Poudel may have been killed for the story he wrote, but if the murdered in question was not a journalist would the Nepali media have so easily jumped to conclusions? Maybe reporters themselves would have gone through the standard journalistic practice of cross checking evidence before dishing out a verdict. But journalists in Nepal consider themselves to be above the purview of professional scrutiny. They suffer from a false sense of moral superiority and are so self-obsessed, they make no effort to hide it. What else explains the ridiculously high number of headlines in dailies that read: 'Theft in Journalist's House'

or 'Journalist's Bike Stolen' or 'Journalist Bereaved'?

The power and privileges that come with being a journalist have led most to think that they are an exclusive class of citizens who can get away with anything. Just look at the op-eds in any major daily, there is a real disconnect between the pundits and readers. Writers sway from one point of view to another from month to month

and don't think readers deserve an explanation. Someone should read to them what they wrote last year.

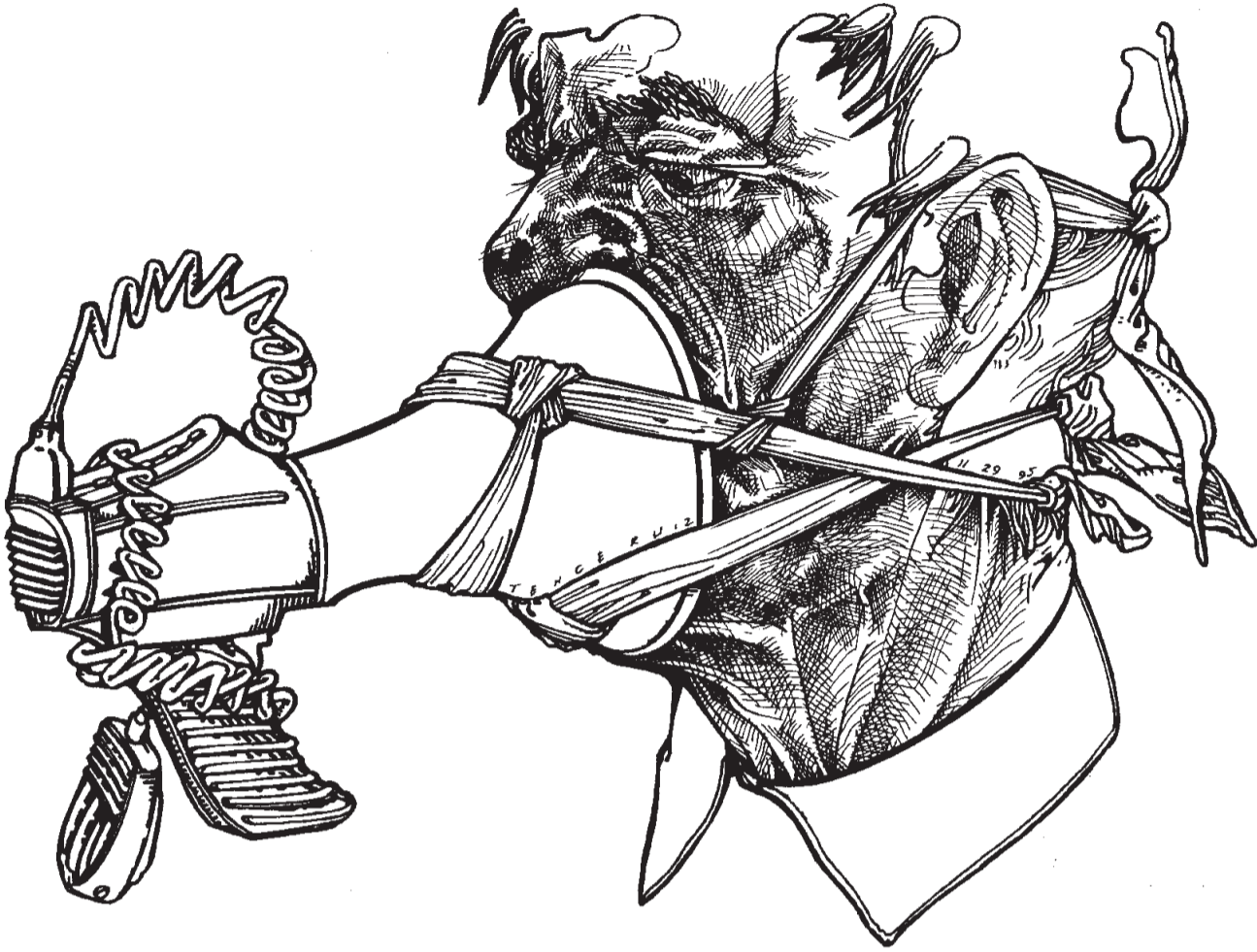
They openly lobby in favour of certain political leaders while viciously lambasting others, they incite fear and spread cynicism. They shamelessly front as the public relations officers of politicians. Circumstances change over time and so can one's beliefs,

but when writers exhibit an utter lack of core values, it becomes hypocrisy and double standards.

We know there is a problem when supposedly sane writers suggest we should not make a fuss over rule of law because those laws were made by status-quoists and don't deserve to be followed. We know there is a problem when in all these years not a single writer can muster the courage to question the use of violence as a political tool.

Most journalists lament that writing is not enough and they want to make the world a better place. Indeed, the world could do with some improvement, but here's the deal: writing with honesty and integrity is enough. We may not have to pass an exam and obtain a professional journalists' license, we may not have to go to the people every few years and seek their endorsement like politicians, but the least we can do is to be honest to ourselves and to our readers.

Perhaps writers can never be completely objective because all writing is inherently manipulative. But they can surely be honest enough to tell readers up front where their loyalties lie. At least they can spare us the shock of discovering that our favourite columnist is a card-carrying member.



काम सानो ठुलो भन्ने हुँदैन । पसिनाको कुनै 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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LINEZ/12

High living

Urban Nepalis transition to posh apartment living



In the past five years, high-rise apartments and commercial complexes have transformed Kathmandu's skyline dramatically. Vertical growth seems to be the way to go to accommodate the capital's swelling population. Apartments in the market range from budget to super luxurious penthouses. Developers say apartment living is gaining popularity because of an increase in young nuclear families seeking homes.

With both spouses working, an apartment lifestyle matches the needs of a modern family better. Retired and older couples with children who live abroad also prefer flats since upkeep of individual houses is a hassle. But many have bought apartments



as an investment, and not necessarily to live in.

"Families are switching from big houses to residential complexes because of convenience and facilities they provide," explains Sudarshan Joshi of Valley Homes. In addition to basic amenities, including uninterrupted power

and water supply, apartments offer well maintained gardens, parking spaces, playgrounds, fitness centres and several other facilities. Choosing an apartment over building a new home relieves families from the trouble of single-handedly supervising the construction of a house and worrying about

utilities and security. Since residential complexes have to follow strict safety and quality standards, they can be expected to be more secure than personal homes. But with apartment buildings rising in almost every neighbourhood, building just a match-box structure is not enough. Developers are upgrading their materials and paying greater attention to designs and interiors.

"Developers now have to put extra effort into designing apartments which offer not just a place to live but a lifestyle," says Bikash Rana of Imperial Developers. Located at Sanepa Height, the seventeen-storey high Imperial Court is home to 100 apartments, with four

penthouses.

Designed by noted architect Siddharth Gopalan, who was earlier involved in Valley Homes project, the building has four towers, each with its own entrance and two lifts in each tower. Imperial Court is also one of the few complexes with a water pump that reaches the top floor in case of fire. "Apartments need to be designed in a way which ensures the privacy of the residents while also promoting a sense of community. Therefore we only have two apartments per floor," says Gopalan and adds, "while each apartment is unique in design and character, all the rooms at Imperial receive plenty of sunlight, have verandas, and are equipped for fire safety."

Apartments used to cater to the urban middle class, now developers are tapping the market for luxury apartments with world class interiors for both locals and expats.

Amol Chandra Pradhan of Central Park Premium Apartments has noticed a visible change in the tastes and standards of consumers. He explains, "Urban Nepalis today are willing to pay large amounts for apartments. They have also become more demanding and insist on attractive interiors, privacy of individual units and quality services." Central Park had hired Canadian architectural firm ARCOP for their designs.

Developers are now waiting for implementation of the policy which will allow foreigners to purchase apartments worth over US \$200,000. The apartment industry is also hoping for a policy that lets non residential Nepalis buy apartments which in turn will greatly boost the demand for premium housing.



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BIZ BRIEFS

Perky ride

Pooja International, authorised dealer of Volkswagen in Nepal has launched its New Year scheme called Big Deal 2069. When customers purchase new models of Volkswagen Vento and Polo, they will receive free Apple iPad 2, car accessories and the company will pay their road tax.

Crowning glory

Dabur Nepal recently introduced Dabur Almond Hair Oil. The oil consists of almond protein and Vitamin E which nourishes damaged hair and is available in 50 ml, 100ml and 200 ml bottles.

Stylish deals

Karuna Interiors has launched its Mega Koseli offer on the occasion of Nepali New Year 2069. Customers will get discounts up to 15 per cent on various items along with daily prizes, gift vouchers and getaway packages to Pokhara and Shivapuri.

Football fever

Corporate Management Solution Nepal is organising 'Kathmandu 2nd Corporate 5 a side Football Tournament 2069' at Gatthaghar Football Ground, Madhyapur Thimi Municipality from May 5 to 6.

Affordable ride

Skoda M.A.W. unveiled its much awaited Fabia which is available in three models: Active Plus, Ambition Plus, and Elegance. All the new models have petrol engines with 1.2 litre capacities. Active Plus is priced at Rs 2295,000 while Ambition Plus is priced at Rs 2575,000 and the higher-end Elegance costs Rs 2695,000.

One stop solution

NepalSutra.com, a one stop web portal to explore Nepal celebrated its public launch last week. The site helps travellers browse through options regarding travel, adventure, dinning, shopping and many more. Its free iPhone app NepalSutra is also available.

Summer is here

Springwood's summer T-shirt range is now available throughout all its stores in the country. The designs in this new collection are youthful, dynamic and available in a wide range of colours and prints.

Buddha's new hangar and plane

By setting up its own aircraft maintenance and training hangar at Kathmandu airport, Buddha Air, Nepal's leading private airline, has taken another leap forward.

Besides Nepal Airlines, Buddha is the second private company to own a hangar at Tribhuvan International Airport. Buddha Air decided to invest \$2.5 million taking into account its growing fleet size which recently welcomed a new aircraft.

The hangar was inaugurated on Wednesday in the presence of Buddha's managing director, Birendra Bahadur Basnet and Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Lokendra Bista. The minister congratulated Buddha Air for adding a feather on its cap. "I would like



to assure you that the government is always ready to support initiatives which ensure a safer sky," he said.

Buddha Air currently operates a fleet of three ATR 72-500s three ATR 42s and four Raytheon Beech 1900Ds.

The airline also operates international flights to Lucknow and Banaras in India, as well as charter flights to Paro in Bhutan. "The hangar augments our fleet expansion plans, and provides the necessary maintenance and training backup," Basnet explained.

Buddha Air also signed an agreement with the Franco-Italian company ATR, for the purchase of another \$7.9 million ATR 72-500 to its fleet. Loans for the hangar and aircraft are being provided by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Kyle Kelhoffer of IFC and ATR's Filippo Bagnato were also present at the signing ceremony inside the new hangar on Wednesday.



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Making Nepal (climate)

Nepali Times caught up with members of the Climate Celebrity Trek in Jumla as they approached the end of their four-month journey on foot across Nepal along the Great Himalayan Trail. We spoke to 21 time Everest summiteer, Apa Sherpa, Dawa Sherpa and Saurav Dhakal as well as UNICEF country representative Hana Singer who joined the trek from Jumla to Rara Lake about how climate change is impacting the Himalaya.

***Nepali Times:* How did UNICEF get involved in the trek?**

Hana Singer: UNICEF works to uplift the condition of women and children around the world, and we have come to realise that unless we address the root cause behind their suffering our efforts will not have durable impact. Hence, we included climate change as one of the main agendas because we believe women and children in developing countries are most vulnerable.

How exactly is climate change affecting Nepali women and children?

The most notable impact has been on rainfall patterns and how erratic rains have led to shortages of drinking water and destroyed crops. In remote areas of Nepal, this forces people to drink contaminated water and bad harvest means people go hungry. The outbreak of waterborne diseases and malnourishment mostly affects women and children.

How can UNICEF help?

UNICEF has been working with the Nepal government through Decentralised Action for Children and Women



PICS: ANURAG ACHARYA

program on improving maternal health, reducing childhood morbidity, fighting malnutrition, reducing incidence of diseases from inadequate sanitation and water supply. Drinking water, sanitation and nutrition are silent emergencies and our aim is to support and prepare the local population for a climate resilient future.

Which areas of Nepal have you focused on?

We have done a vulnerability mapping and found that 40 per cent of Nepal's population is malnourished, of which 60 per cent are children from mid and far western districts. Jumla has been selected as a model district and we are working with line ministries and local bodies to improve nutrition intake, sanitation,

A trekker's best friend

“Her name is Setuk,” I read in *Nepali Times* #594, about a yellow eye-browed dog that had joined Apa and Dawa Sherpa in their Great Himalayan Trail expedition. But the pictures looked oddly familiar; in fact the dog looked exactly like Benny, befriended us during our trek to Thyangbo Glacier near Thame last November. It was rumoured that she had been seen at Camp 2 (6,400m) on Mt Everest the previous season.

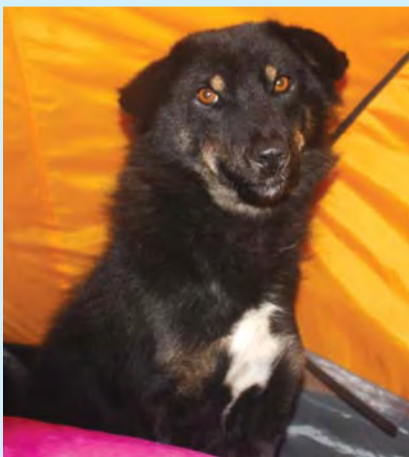
I'm not quite sure how far along the track she joined us. Benny was a carefree waif, trotting along with her tail held high and a smile on her face. She neither asked to join in, nor demanded anything from us. She was simply there, happy to be a part of the group. I don't remember a

whine or a whimper. It was as if she knew her choice and would bear the consequences, content despite the difficulties of the mountainous environment.

We named her Benny, after our Australian friend Ben, and she quickly became a favourite. Raksha and Mingma from our group became her custodians, finding her a mat to lie on and keeping her sheltered with our additional warm clothes. At night, back at camp, she would sleep in the vestibule of their tent, protected from the jaws of prowling beasts

Benny was a true mountain dog, resilient to the climate and altitude. Even the harshness below Thyangbo Glacier at 4500m didn't intimidate her. Off she would leap after our climbing guides, hopping along the rocks of the moraine. Light-footed on the snow, she would be way ahead of us, her bare paws surprisingly unperturbed by the cold.

We were working on our mountaineering skills on the way, making stops to haul each other in simulated crevasse rescues, building snow caves and snow belays, and practicing ice-climbing up a glacier wall.



ALPINE CANINE: The dog that followed Helen Jean's expedition up to Thyangbo Glacier stayed behind in Thame, and then joined the Climate Smart Celebrity Trekkers on the Great Himalayan Trail and walked right across Nepal. She was named 'Setuk' and posed with Apa and Dawa Sherpa and the team in Gorkha in early March (far right). Setuk later met a friend and stayed behind in Kaski. The celebrity trekkers have now adopted a new dog (inset, right).

These long stops would surprise Benny, as if she was a regular trekker. She would lie down on the snow, watch us with interest, but cooled down rapidly with the inactivity of a curious observer.



She accompanied us down to Thame a few days later, happily settling on the front doorstep of our lodge. We left her there as we descended to Namche Bajar, hoping she would choose the quiet, safe

village as her new home.

It did not seem like a mere coincidence that the GHT team had met their companion in Thame, where we had left Benny. Upon reading about Setuk, I got in touch with Dawa

resilient

infrastructure, agriculture and health, but we will expand our program in the entire Karnali region.

Apa Sherpa, you have undertaken this trek to draw awareness about the impact of climate change in the Himalaya. Do you feel it is working?
Apa Sherpa: I lost my house to a climate disaster in 1989 and know how vulnerable the mountains are. We prepared for two years for this trip and I feel we have generated a lot of support for the cause. Many have joined our trek and the media has widely disseminated our messages. We also have been talking to people along the trails, making them aware of the situation and asking them to reduce pollution in the mountains.



Dawa, what visible signs of climate change have you seen?
Dawa Sherpa: The most visible impact was on the crops in the eastern hills due to frost. Another worrying indicator was the receding snowline and dwindling yarsagumba. Overharvesting has

made yarsa picking more difficult and less worthwhile. We also noticed a brewing conflict over yarsa, while the locals want to protect their yarsa lands, harvesters are desperate to earn money. Yarsa has been keeping hundreds employed for now, but what will happen once it runs out?

Apa: We saw an old poster of Machhapuchhre at a rest house in Beni which shows the mountain thickly covered in snow. But when we walked past the mountain, it was a black pyramid. In Kaski locals told us how little it snows these days.

Saurav, you must have come across many attractive spots with trekking potential?
Saurav Dhakal: Yes, there are still many amazingly beautiful areas in Nepal waiting to be explored. The trek through Dhorpatan was one of the most memorable. The scenic beauty and rich biodiversity of the area are unparalleled. But sadly, we heard about this 'new' trekking route from former guerrillas who had participated in many battles, including the attack on Beni in 2005. They even guided us through what is now called the Guerrilla Trek. The most beautiful places in Nepal witnessed the most horrific conflict.

Dawa: The Guerrilla Trek may be a catchy brand to attract tourists, but I feel the wounds of conflict are too raw and the tragedy still fresh in people's psyche. The government must think twice before packaging and selling their grief.

Saurav: The war is a part of our history, and it must be documented and researched. But let us not commercialise it.

It seems the dog which joined the Great Himalayan Trail has a past



POSTSCRIPT:
In his *Nepali Times* article ('New canine member joins the Great Himalayan Trail' #594) Dawa Sherpa wrote about how his expedition adopted Setuk, and how she seemed sure-footed as she crossed the arduous Teshi Lapsa Pass into Rolwaling. Setuk later walked right across Nepal. But in Kaski's Ghandruk village she fell in love with a local dog and stayed behind.



RUMA RAJBHANDARI

“Thank you, Ma”

Nothing in the world will be an adequate Mother's Day present for the person who gave me the gift of life

ELIZA STHAPIT

It was already 5:30 and I had to head home soon. But I still had not made up my mind about the gift. I knew my children would be eagerly waiting for me to tell stories from school or ask me what I would be making for dinner. I wandered from shop to shop in search of the “perfect” present, something as special as my mother.

I returned empty handed. There was nothing in the shops that would repay my creator, my mother, for that special gift called life she gave me. Nothing in the world would be an adequate Mother's Day present.

At home my daughters were busy making secret plans with their Dad. “They are much smarter than me,” I thought and smiled to myself. But this made me more anxious. I had only a few hours left to think of a creative present for my own mother.

That night, as I read bed-time stories to my daughters, memories of my own childhood came back. I pictured myself as a little child running around with my mother trying to catch up with me. She was always there for me, holding my hands when I fell, taking me into her arms when I was scared and wiping my tears with her chunni.

She was always giving, and never expected any gratitude. She wanted me to be happy and enjoy life. From carrying me to my first day of kindergarten to holding my hand during graduation, Ma never failed to give me her best. From the day she nurtured me in her womb till the day I became a mother myself, she has been my hero.

I could spend a fortune buying her a present for tomorrow. I could celebrate mother's day every day of the year. Yet none of these gestures would be enough to show how much I cherish her and how much she has inspired me and given me her blessings.

As I watched my children go to sleep happily that night, I finally found the perfect present. I decided to simply say “Thank you, Ma.” I will thank her for her patience and understanding, for trusting me and always pushing me to achieve my full potential. I will tell her she means the world to me and my love for her will only grow stronger every day.

I wish one day my daughters feel the same way about me, and they will have to give me nothing more than a little thank you note. 🇳🇵



Eliza Sthapit is a passionate environmentalist and a mother of two daughters.

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EVENTS



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

Dutch Queen's Day, be a part of a special flea market where you can buy or sell your products. Rs 600 (for stall), starts from 30 April, 12.30 pm to 5pm, Summit Hotel, Kupondole



BIKE NIGHT, catch the screening of documentary *Life Cycles* followed by BMX cycle stunts by Ashish and friends and a cycle repair workshop by Pancha Astha. 21 April, 5pm onwards, Sattya Media, Jawalakhel, 5523486, 9813075926

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

Jamacho Challenge, put on your running shoes and take part in this fun race organised by Sustainable Energy Nepal (SEN). Rs 500 to Rs 750 (inclusive of lunch, water and transportation), 21 April, 8am, Balaju Chowk, 9841966118



THE SIGNATURE WALK, Party Nepal brings you Miss Nepal through the ages in this exclusive show. 20 April, 7pm onward, Hotel Radisson, Lazimpat

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 Bajar, for tickets call 9802051400

SIGN, Live music by SIGN band every week except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 7.30 pm onwards, Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Call 4411818



NAYA FAYA LIVE, don't miss SKA Punk band Naya Faya's live performance. Rs 200, 8pm to 10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

DINING

La Rotisserie, get your fill of roasted delights like chicken, duck and trout. Jawalakhel



JUST BAKED, a cozy café with amazing pastries and friendly ambience. Old Baneshwor



DHOKAIMA CAFE, exquisite atmosphere, friendly service, cozy bar, place to see and be seen at. Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113

Café Soma, enjoy a scrumptious brunch and indulge in crepes with sugar and lemon. Jhamsikhel

Attic, comfy lounge bar ideal for Friday night drinking before hitting the dance floor. Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat, 984161476

Casablanca, enjoy the food and sing your hearts out at the karaoke station. Babar Mahal Revisited



CINNAMON GRILL AND LOUNGE, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. Jhamsikhel, 5521339



PUMPERNICKEL BAKERY, grab 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



SAIGON PHO, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lazimpat

Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Naxal, 4424303


Café Du Temple, famous for its delicious food, warm ambience and a beautiful roof top view. Patan Durbar Square, 5527127



GRILL ME, a restaurant with a warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. Jhamsikhel, 5535294



SUMMIT HOTEL, savour the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. Jhamsikhel, 5521810



Circus story

Circus Kathmandu, a contemporary circus company is organising a fundraising performance on 20 April to help social circus projects and raise awareness about the dangers of child trafficking in Nepal. The thirteen-member troupe is made up of children who were rescued from Indian circuses by Kathmandu based Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation. 16-year-old Aman and 18-year-old Bijay who won gold medals at the Sixth National Games held in Dhangadi two months ago are also participating in the show. The performers have been training under professional international coaches from Australia, Canada, UK, France and Switzerland and will showcase daring routines such as trapeze dancing, acrobatics, and juggling.

Proceeds from the show will support performing arts trainings for rescued children. "We will use the money to fund circus workshops and buy equipment so that the children can go around the country demonstrating their talent," says Kristy Best, communications director at the foundation.

Date: 20 April
Doors open at: 5:30 pm, show starts at 6pm
Venue: Bulls Club, Nakkhu
Tickets: Rs 500 for adults and Rs 200 for children
For more information visit
www.ebtrust.org.uk
www.sapanacircus.blogspot.com
Or call 5523642



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PREMIUM VODKA

Ghangri Café, a quiet and relaxing place with delicious food. Although known for their open momos, their Chef Salad is equally mouthwatering. *Pulchowk, 5528703*



NO NAME RESTAURANT, friendly ambience with palatable dishes- try their delicious momochas. *Putalisadak*



COSMOPOLITAN CAFÉ, located at the heart of Basantapur, this cozy café offers arguably the best chicken sizzler in town. *Basantapur (along Kathmandu Durbar Square), 4225246*



VESPER CAFÉ, has a quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps. *Jhamsikhel*



8 DEGREES, from lemon lassies to spicy pork stews, 8 degrees is a great place to try continental dishes. *Jhamsikhel*

The Olive Garden, now offering a revamped dinner menu with various trout dishes. *Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat*

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

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

GETAWAYS



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Universal Festival

Fulbari Resort in Pokhara is all set to host the two day Universal Religion Festival from 21 April onwards. The festival promises to bring together local and international artists. Guests will also have unlimited access to art equipment and can explore their creative sides while enjoying a special dance by psychedelic artist Carin Dickson. Apart from music, visitors can take part in yoga and massage sessions, tattoo conventions, flea markets, jewellery making workshops, hula hoop and poi dancing.

Tickets range from USD 350 to USD 800 (Limited tickets are available at the entrance), April 21 to April 23, 10 am to 5:30 pm, Fulbari Resort, Pokhara

Visit: www.urnepal.com



SOMEPLACE ELSE

Tucked away in a desolate alley in Patan, Fuji Bakery defies the trader's triadic mantra: 'Location! Location! Location!' In its ninth baking year, the Japanese-inspired bakeshop has kneaded its own niche of signature breads and confections, despite a crummy location.

Early birds (8 am) get first dibs at racks of homemade goods that have yet to thwart our craving. During peak loadshedding hours, it's best to call ahead and avoid disappointment.

Sweet standards popular with local schoolchildren like the Apple Pie (Rs 45), Pain au Chocolat (Rs 35) and Banana Cake (Rs 50) are arguably the best recipes in the valley. When it comes to Pains au Chocolat or chocolate croissants, bakers commonly skimp on filling; but Fuji



PICS: MARCO POLLO

Fuji Bakery

spreads a thick, generous layer ensuring a chocolatey bite throughout.

For a Japanese twist that may sound outrageous, the Melon Bread (Rs 35) features a simple, delectable bun with a green pea centre. Fans of Chinese red bean buns and desserts will likely lap up its green cousin.

Fuji's Sour Creams (Rs 50 for a package of eight), a *Nepali Times* staff favourite, are meant for sharing—but only if you are so generous. Delicate

orbs of flaky puff pastry are freshly piped to order with rich custard cream that gushes in your mouth. Balk the embarrassing innuendo and keep it a one bite sensation.

On the side of savoury, the Wiener Roll (Rs 50) and Croquet (Rs 35) are top-choice contenders for a light lunch or an after-school sedative. The spiced sausage in a semi-sweet bun is perfect on its own or with a touch of dijon, while the croquets are fast-selling,




deep-fried pockets stuffed with chicken or veggies.

Fuji sets up a few tables and serves tea and Nescafe but is more shop than cafe and by no means a place to study or lunch. Pick up Fuji's sandwich saviour, the Pullman, a sliced or unsliced square, white loaf, or browse

through other food products other than bread like organic coffee, honey, miso, white cheese and lapsi.

Like many good things, Fuji's closed on Mondays and prices may have slightly increased since the time of review.

Revisiting Fuji Bakery serves a sweet ending for this nomad's gastronomic tour of the Land of Gandharvas. Who knew that Nepal was not just about momos and tungba? They will be missed, truly. 

Marco Pollo

Towards Patan Dhoka, back track to the juncture between Pulchok Engineering College and the World Food Program and veer left down to the end of the lane



The Hunter



The *Hunter* is one of those rare films that catches you by the throat, and leaves you watching with bated breath as you wonder what is going to happen next. Strangely enough though, the film is the antithesis of a fast paced action movie. It is the extraordinary skill of its director, Daniel Nettheim, and his cinematographer Robert Humphreys, which together, in the best kind of cinematic collaboration, create an unforgettable film with an essence of the hard to achieve cinematic magic that leaves the viewer still thinking about the film days and days later.

The Hunter begins with the amazing Willem Dafoe waiting in a cold Paris hotel room for some cryptic information via the telephone. Slowly it becomes clear that his character, Martin David, is a mercenary, and the mysterious and malevolent Red Leaf Bio Technology company is hiring him to travel to Australia to hunt the last remaining Tasmanian Tiger. He is to kill it, harvest its organs, and return so that the company may use the tiger's remains for its own nefarious purposes.

When Martin David arrives in remote Hobart, Australia, he is in the guise of a zoologist studying the Tasmanian Devil – a marsupial found on the Australian island state of Tasmania. He is put up by “the university” at a remote house owned by



Lucy Armstrong (Frances O’ Connor) from where he can drive into the Tasmanian wild to look for his prey. Martin arrives at the house to find it in disarray, Lucy’s husband Jarrah, who was also a zoologist, has been missing for months in the wild, and she is almost always asleep – stricken, and self-medicated by sleeping pills. Her two children, Sass (Morgana Davies), a foul mouthed little blonde, and her brother Bike (Finn Woodlock), are running nearly wild, kept tabs on by a seemingly avuncular visitor Jack Mindy (Sam Neill) who lives down the road.

As Martin shares his time between his search for the tiger in the wild and the house, he slowly forms a bond with his host family. Both the film, and Martin’s emotional arc, develop through this beautifully portrayed relationship. Intermittently, stunning scenes of Martin’s search in the primeval Tasmanian wild hold the film together, and slowly, we get a strong sense of who Martin really is as he spends his time searching for the elusive tiger in the purple hues of the gorgeous Tasmanian dusk.

It is hard to describe just how searing the last few scenes of the film are. Every tragic and beautiful event in the film comes full circle as Martin sets out for the wild one final time - and finds the Tasmanian Tiger. What he does is the epitome of amazing writing, something that only happens when writers know their characters inside out. In the end, all I can say is that *The Hunter* may well be one of the best films of 2011. Watch it, but be aware, its terrible beauty might haunt you for days. 🇳🇵

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

Brain fever



Maoist leader Janardan Sharma was referred to India for treatment of encephalitis. An important reason for referral as reported by the local papers was to determine the cause of illness in order to guide therapy. Encephalitis is the inflammation of the brain whereas meningitis is the inflammation of the plastic-like covering of the brain. The distinction is often naturally blurred.

Recently at Patan Hospital we studied encephalitic patients with fever and neurological changes, a common presentation of this illness. Equally common in Nepal is the fact that a microbiological diagnosis (what bug caused the illness?) is seldom made, limiting treatment to an educated guess. In order to rectify this situation and discover the pathogen (bug) causing the illness, we studied the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of these patients with fever and neurological problems. The

CSF is the fluid that closely surrounds and bathes the brain and spinal cord. Hence findings in the CSF (more than the blood) accurately reflect the problems in the brain. To obtain CSF, a simple procedure called the lumbar puncture is carried out and is done multiple times a day in hospitals across Nepal.

Our preliminary results from a CSF sample of 87 patients with fever and neurological



problems revealed that a group of viruses called the enterovirus were the prime culprits. This group has rarely been documented in the CSF here in Nepal probably because of a lack of PCR-based testing facilities. The good news is that enterovirus caused meningitis is usually self-limiting and has a good prognosis. The

other causes of fever and neurological problems were the usual bacterial suspects causing meningitis for which there are effective antibiotics. An important cause from our population of patients was Japanese Encephalitis (JE) which has an effective and inexpensive Chinese vaccine for prevention. The disease (JE) is fraught with complications, so prevention (vaccine administration among other measures) is clearly a better option.

An elusive bug (see picture) that caused meningitis in our sample population was the tuberculosis bacteria. It is potentially treatable with effective drugs. A very important and consistent finding about TB meningitis (TBM) is the duration of illness.

The longer the duration, TBM is more likely. Newspapers reported Sharma, the Maoist leader to be sick at home for a month when things suddenly took a turn for the worse. If there is an infectious origin to his problem, TBM is an important, epidemiology-based diagnosis to consider in the Nepali setting. 🇳🇵

WEEKEND WEATHER

After a relatively dry week, the moisture is building up again with the arrival of two successive westerly fronts over the weekend. This will send the barometer plummeting, as the water vapour rises along the Himalaya, condensing into rain. This will mean thunder, lightning and even hailstones along the foothills towards late afternoon and evening. Mornings will be generally sunny and calm, with the wind picking up in the high valleys by mid-day. By Sunday, the high pressure should rule again.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28-15	27-15	28-14



BIKRAM RAI

CARD HOLDER: PM Baburam Bhattarai shows off his new LPG consumer card at its inauguration program in Singa Darbar on Tuesday. The government began issuing these cards starting Tuesday and card holders will now be able to purchase LPG cylinders at a subsidised rate.



AMIR JOSHI

NATURAL IS BEST: Indian Ambassador Jayant Prasad addresses the opening ceremony of the India-Nepal Natural Products Conference on Wednesday in Kathmandu. The conference was jointly organised by BP Koirala Foundation, Dabur Nepal and Centre for Molecular Dynamics Nepal.



BIKRAM RAI

READY? Jujubhai Shrestha, a local of Bode village, volunteers to get his tongue pierced, following the annual festival of Bisket Jatra in Thimi on Saturday. The ritual is believed to bring good luck to the villagers.



BIKRAM RAI

KICK START: Friends Club plays against New Road Team during a British Gurkha Cup 2012 match at Dasrath Stadium on Wednesday. Friends Club won by a goal and proceeded to the quarter finals.

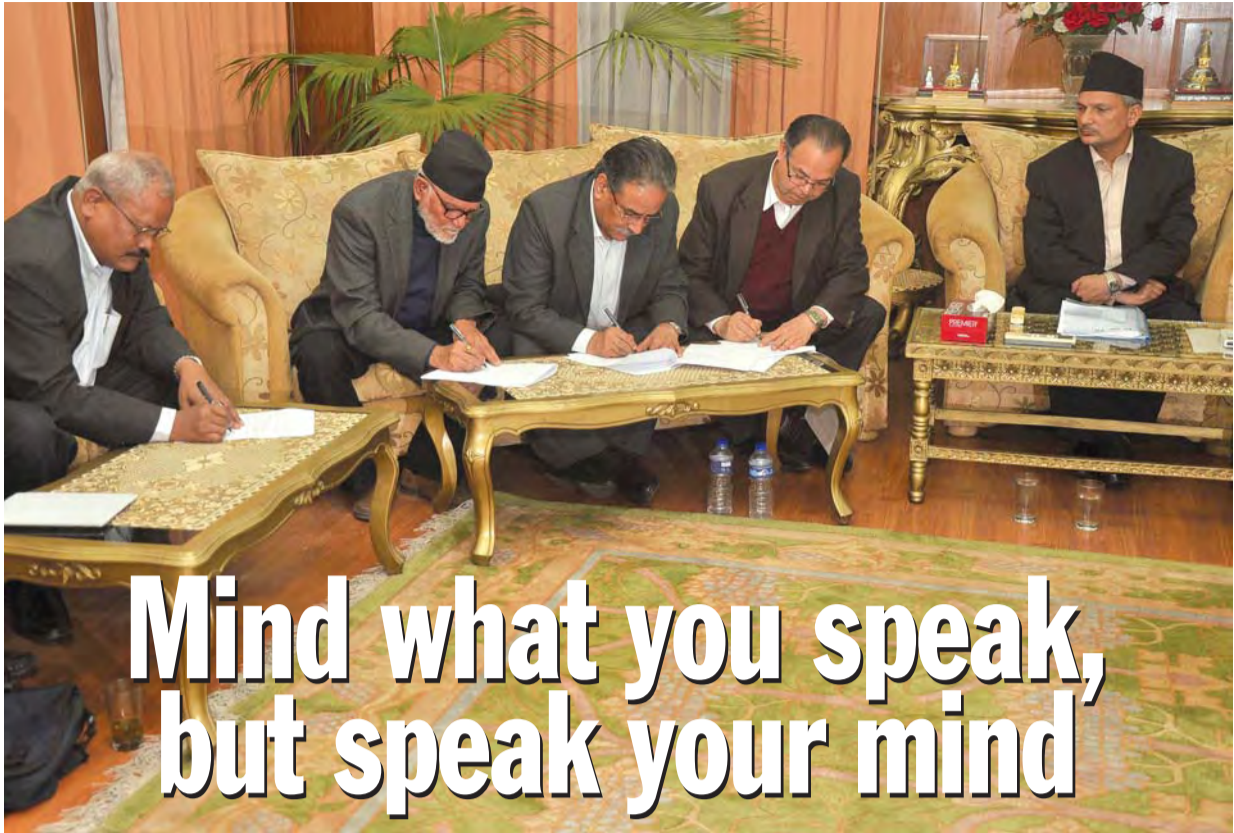


For the first time in many years, Madhav Kumar Nepal made an honest political statement and not the usual rhetorical nonsense for which he has been flagged too often. Speaking with *BBC Nepali Service* on Wednesday he admitted that decades of Kathmandu centric politics and democratic deficit at the grassroots were the main reasons why people were demanding federalism, and not because one party had set the agenda.

The renewed confidence building among the parties has sent positive signals and although the dispute resolution sub-committee extended the deadline to resolve contentious issues by another five days, people are happy to wait because they finally see serious engagement. To be sure, there is not a shred of doubt that the parties had been prisoners of their own dilemma and would not have arrived at this point had there been no incentives to cooperate. So the good news for the public is: in all likelihood, there will be a statute by May 27. But the bad news is: not everybody will be happy.

At a time when ethnic caucus and Madhesi parties are already standing together on issues of identity, a cross party caucus of Madhesi lawmakers from the NC, UML, UCPN-M and MJF-Nepal led by Upendra Yadav has given further impetus to the demand for identity based federalism. Minister for Communication, Rajkishor Yadav who also leads a faction in the Madhesi front says the parties should look around and assess the overriding sentiments instead of shying away, but was quick to add that room for forward looking alternative proposals still exists. Says Yadav, "The reality today is there are grievances among the Madhesis, Dalits and Janajatis, but it is also true that the goodwill which exists in Nepali society will not let the country disintegrate."

He says current grievances are like wounds, which if left unattended will infect the entire system but once treated, will heal and remove all traces of ethnic or regional resentments in the future. While Yadav's



Nepal's transition is not being driven by issues at hand, but by those that will follow once the constitution is declared

words are reassuring, it is becoming increasingly clear that agreement among the top brass of three parties alone is not sufficient to ensure a constitution by May 27. Although the protagonists in the ongoing talks are all Brahmin male leaders of three major parties, Yadav believes the final

negotiation will be between those who stand for change and those who resist it. The identity issue, although well founded, is a tricky one which is sure to test even the cleverest of the lot. A member engaged in the negotiation told us there is already an informal agreement on 6 to 8 federal

units, but parties can't seem to agree on names for future states which in turn will decide the basis of federalism. On forms of governance, things look much clearer because the parties have almost agreed on a directly elected executive prime minister with special prerogative powers

given to the constitutional president. And even if the agreement cannot be reached, proposals will be voted upon. The question of constitutional court is also a mere technical issue and it might not be an entirely bad idea to mull on the possibility of having a constitutional court for a limited period, especially to address legal anomalies that the new constitution is sure to pose in the short run.

I have often argued in this space that the final days of Nepal's transition are not being driven by issues at hand, but by those that will follow once the constitution is declared. You don't have to be a genius to find out why Sushil Koirala, Madhav Nepal or Pushpa Kamal Dahal are dashing off to districts in the far east and far west every week between their marathon meetings. Notwithstanding the deadlines, people are actually getting to know what the leaders are up to first hand and in return, the leaders will be more confident when they go back to the people during elections.

There is nothing wrong with weekend visits as long as the leaders make the most of their weekdays, and while they are advised to mind what they speak publicly, they would also do well to speak their minds at the negotiation table.

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Presidential roadshow



President Ram Baran Yadav welcomed on New Year's Day by residents of Kanpur in Kavre on the first of five stops that day across central Nepal.



A large gathering drapes khadas on the President at the inauguration of a stupa in Narayanthan of Kavre.



Okhaldhunga still has the ruins of an agriculture extension office bombed by Maoists during the war.

KUNDA DIXIT

Nearly 250 years after Nepal's unification, the Timal region with its historic Hindu and Buddhist shrines gets its first visit by a national leader. President Ram Baran Yadav tells a cheering crowd it has never been more important to protect that unity.

With just a month to go to finish writing the new constitution that will carve Nepal into federal units and decide on a new form of government, President Yadav is on a personal crusade to drive home the message of unity, democracy and development.

On Nepali new year's day on

13 April, he flew across central Nepal with symbolic stops at a renovated Buddhist monastery and Hindu temple in Kavre, garlanded freedom fighters in Okhaldhunga and graced Siraha's Sahlesh festival.

Everywhere he went, the President's message was the same: "We may be Himali Nepalis, Pahadi Nepalis, Madhesi Nepalis, but we are all Nepalis first." And judging from the applause he got in the mountains or the plains, it was clear the first president of republican Nepal was voicing the people's fears of ethnic fragmentation, and hopes for a more prosperous future.

"I want to assure you that I will always work to safeguard Nepal's unity, and social harmony," he told a large crowd in Rampur in Okhaldhunga, a centre of pro-

democracy activism during the Panchayat period, "we will work together to fulfil the aspirations of those who sacrificed their lives for democracy."

Born to a simple peasant family in the Tarai, the 64-year-old president was influenced by Nepali Congress leaders like BP Koirala who were living in exile in Calcutta where he was a medical student. He later became BP's personal physician, spent nearly a year in jail, and after 1990 served as health minister. He is one of the few NC leaders who did not join a Madhesi party in 2007 for which his home in Janakpur was bombed, and he was ridiculed for being a "Pahadi lackey".

"As president I have to stay above ethnicity and party affiliation, but I have been influenced by three of BP's goals:

democracy, nationalism and socialism," Yadav tells us during the stopover in Okhaldhunga, "and I identify strongly with Gandhi's teachings on non-violence and the sacrifices he made for communal harmony."

Everywhere he goes, the President is greeted with garlands and people showering him with flower petals. Ordinary Nepalis seem to be drawn by his refreshing simplicity and humility, something they haven't seen in former kings and rulers. "He is just like us," said elderly Kavre farmer Man Bahadur Lama, after draping a khada on the President, and in return Yadav clasped Man Bahadur's hands that were joined in a namaste.

Accompanying the President to the monastery is the Maoist State Minister for



बम्पर उपहार

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अर्धवार्षिक ग्राहक बम्परबाहेक अन्य योजनामा सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन् ।
त्रैमासिक ग्राहक भने हरेक दिन र हरेक क्षण योजनामा मात्र सहभागी हुन पाउनेछन् ।
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for unity



Speaking in Maithili, the President addresses thousands of pilgrims, many from India, at the Sahlesh Festival in Siraha where an orchid blooms exactly on Baisakh 1 every year.

As his helicopter prepares to take off for the return flight to Kathmandu, President Ram Baran Yadav says he will work to protect Nepal's unity.

Energy, Surya Man Dong, who is one of those accused in the murder in 2005 of a Dolakha UML activist. It is a sign of how far we have come that Dong is now sitting next to the President in a night-vision helicopter that used to drop “Tora Bora” mortar bombs on Maoist positions during the war. At the monastery function, Dong credits the President for “standing up for national unity”.
After the function in Okhaldhunga, President Yadav changes from his labeda-suruwal to a spotless white Madhesi pajama-kurta and gamchha. But he keeps on his dhaka topi. A short 20-minute flight and the helicopter alights in a cloud of yellow dust near the Sahlesh Mela site in Siraha where a rare orchid is said to bloom exactly on new year’s day every year.

There is loud applause from the thousands gathered here as Maithili writer Dharendra Premarshi welcomes the President as “the pride of Mithila, and pride of the Nepali nation”. As ‘Sayaun Thunga Phul Ka Hame’ is played, dhoti-clad people clap and dance to the national anthem, and Maithili school children sing along in Nepali to Byakul Maila’s powerful lyrics and Amber Gurung’s folksy melody.
The President switches to Maithili to deliver the same message of unity to the people, half of whom are Maithili-speaking pilgrims from across the border in Bihar. It is an emotional speech, and the President has established a bond of kinship with the crowd. “With our diversity of mountains and plains this land is nature’s jewel, a

botanical garden, yet our own brothers are grazing goats in the deserts of Arabia,” he says, “with your support I pledge to work to institutionalise democracy, harness our water and agriculture, and protect our forests and soil so Nepalis don’t have to migrate to find work.”
Taking off for Kathmandu from near the Indian border, President Yadav looks despondent as he gazes down at the barren Chure hills. The President has been trying to get the government to protect these fragile foothills, without much success. “You can see that wherever the forests have gone, there is erosion and landslides,” Yadav says, “if we don’t do something, in a few years the Chure and Tarai will be deserts.”
When he was a boy, Ram Baran Yadav

used to graze buffaloes together with his Pahadi neighbours at the edge of the Char Kose Jhari, the forests that have now vanished. “In my life I have seen it all gone,” he says.
The sun is about to set as the Nepal Army MI-17 lands near Shital Niwas at the Bhairavnath Battalion, the notorious barracks where during the war at least 48 suspected Maoists were detained, tortured and taken away for execution in Shivapuri.
“Our descendants will never forgive us if we let Nepal disintegrate,” the President says before taking the motorcade back to his residence, “I have to do what I can to protect Nepal’s national unity and democracy. This is my dharma.”



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“Pahadis are not our enemies”

Sarla Gautam in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 13 - 27 April

हिमाल

“My nephew was murdered by thugs, not Pahadis. One Ram Ekwel has already been killed and if you take revenge for his murder, more Ekwals will be slaughtered,” Narayan Rai, 78, told a group of enraged youths who wanted to ‘avenge’ the death of a fellow Madhesi.

Ram Ekwel was killed four years ago by hooligans of hill origin in Rautahat. But even after all these years, Narayan feels the same about Pahadis. “Pahadis are not our enemies,” he declared. His son

Nawal Kishor revealed that during the Madhes uprising his family sheltered a few Pahadis and on one occasion a Pahadi even rescued him.

Madhesis aren't happy that their Pahadi neighbours had to abandon their homes. Shyam Prasad Sah from Janakpur says he was heart-broken to see his neighbours leave. Many in the region are still baffled at how quickly communal violence spread in a multicultural society.

Rekha Yadav of Barmajhiya, on the other hand, worries that the new generation will grow up in a homogenous environment and miss out on cross-cultural bonding and interaction.

Those who were displaced during the Madhes movement have not yet adjusted to their new homes either. Sudhira Dahal who fled from Janakpur says, “I visited Janaki Mandir after the riot, could not control myself and cried a lot. If the situation improves I want to return.”

The Madhes movement was not a fight for disintegration, but for integration. The pain of displaced Pahadis and regrets of Madhesi communities are very visible. Therefore, the concerns of the displaced need to be addressed immediately and the people of Tarai should be reunited.



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Working For a World Free of Poverty

Battle of ‘true’ Marxists

Subodh Pyakurel, *Nagarik*, 15 April

नागरिक

While rest of the world functions on the basis of merit, our leaders in Nepal are still trying to grab power through money and might. The Maoists too are holding on tight to Lenin and Mao's outdated philosophies of ‘cultural revolution’ and ‘people's government’. However these leaders would do well to learn from the fate of Gaddafi and Gyanendra who tried to dictate their will on the people and perished.

Marx always favoured a strong government kept under control by the people and emphasised the importance of freedom. But who are today's ‘true’ communists inspired by? Peru's Gonzalo?

And how long will Nepalis have to sacrifice their future because influential people are choosing guns over development? If we allow parties to bargain their way to power all the time it won't be long when leaders of armed separatist groups such as Jay Krishna Goit start twisting arms and demanding a second integration.

Tejbilash Adhikari, Letter to Editor in *Nagarik*, 16 April

It is sad to see an intellectual like Subodh Pyakurel making such superficial comments and taking a moral high ground on violence. Since he has good things to say about late UML leader Madan Bhandari, what does he have to say about Jhapa's bloody movement in the early 1970s?

As a devout Marxist and ex-UML leader, I am sure Pyakurel is aware of the ongoing class struggle and that movements turn violent only when they are suppressed. It is because of such struggles that Nepalis like you and me are now citizens of a republic. And comparing these revolutions with Goit's activities is highly unacceptable.

Mr Pyakurel, when you talk about Nepalis sacrificing their future, I am not sure which Nepali you are referring to, because a majority of them did not have any future back then.

Also to claim that thousands of janajatis and dalits picked up guns on the insistence of one party is a failure of your imagination. Are you trying to imply that we Nepalis are simply ‘cattle class’ who cannot think for ourselves?



Banner: Let's keep Kathmandu clean
Man: “Shouldn't they be cleaning the mess inside?”
Papers: Corruption, anarchy, decay

नागरिक Deven in *Nagarik*, 18 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Prachanda is ungrateful.”

CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal speaking about Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal in an interview with *Nepal*.

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Assembly antics



Dhruba Simkhada in Kantipur, 14 April

कान्तिपुर

List of activities that CA members have been accused of:

- 1. Murder and abduction**
 - Bal Krishna Dhungel (Maoist): Sentenced to life imprisonment by court.
 - Shyam Sundar Gupta (Sadbhavana Anadadevi): Abduction
 - Dol Bahadur Karki (UML): Murder
 - Baban Singh (Independent): Murder and abduction
- 2. Sold official passports**
 - Gayatri Sah (Janata Dal)
 - B P Yadav (Madhesi Forum)
 - Naradmuni Rana (UML)
 - S R Yadav (Maoist)
- 3. Corruption, cheating**
 - Jayaprakash Gupta (Forum Democratic): Jailed for corruption
 - Indramati Yadav (Maoist): Fined for stealing electricity
 - Dol Bahadur Karki (UML): Corruption
 - Lhyarkal Lama (UML): Possessed passports of China and Nepal
 - Khadga Biswakarma (Maoist): Changed license plate of official car while minister
- 4. Objectionable behaviour**
 - Kamala Sharma (UML): Hit minister with a sandal in CA
 - Achyut Raj Pandey (NC): Caught gambling
 - Krishna P Yadav (NC): Caught in flagrante with prostitute
 - Biswendra Paswan (Dalit Janjati Party): Defenestrated chair from CA
 - Sanjaya Kumar Sah (Forum Loktantrik): Suspended for 10 days for breaking CA microphone
 - Karima Begum (Forum Loktantrik): Hit CDO of Parsa
 - Chanda Chaudhari (Forum Loktantrik): Vandalised own official car after it broke down
 - Sharada Nepali (ML Samajbadi): Caught drunk in Nepalganj, detained by Police.
 - Lekhraj Bhatt, Surya Man Dong, Chandra Bahadur Thapa (Maoist): Damaged Finance Minister's briefcase with budget speech
 - Saroj Kumar Yadav (Sadbhavana): Misbehaved at a hospital after drinking as State Health Minister
 - Mahendra Prasad Yadav (TMLP): As Irrigation Minister, misbehaved with Secretary Brinda Hada
 - Prem Bahadur Pulami (Maoist): Obtained a fake candidate to sit for his SLC exam.

Sign or resign

Editorial in Naya Patrika, 15 April

नयाँ पत्रिका

President Ram Baran Yadav has said he won't sign a constitution that will divide the country. The President's words may sound patriotic and please conformists but he should realise that as a ceremonial head of state he does not have the authority to make such political statements. Lately, President Yadav has been publicising the need to include all three regions - Himal, Pahad and the Tarai - while creating new states. He also opposes state restructuring based on ethnicity and favours the outdated Westminster system over a directly- elected executive president or a mixed governance system.

Yadav's recent statement has raised a serious question: will he accept a constitution that goes against his beliefs? If the President does not want to sign a constitution which supports ethnic federalism, inclusion and secularism he should sign his resignation letter before 27 May instead in order to protect his archaic values. The 15-year long people's war and the April revolution have made it fairly clear that Nepalis want these ideals to be enshrined in the constitution. The interim constitution too stipulates that the President has to approve the decision endorsed by the CA without asking any questions. Therefore, it is wrong for him, both legally and morally, to reject the constitution.

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Crossing the t's and dotting the i's

If anyone had bothered to ask, the Ass'd have told you not to wait with bated breath for the outcome of the "lane dane" in Hatiban between 22 alfa-male leaders of the four main parties this week. The fact is that they can't be seen to be agreeing so easily even if there is very little disagreement remaining. They have neatly divided up the spoils between themselves, all that remains is to cross the t's and dot the i's. For public consumption and for the Baddies to convince their hardliners, it has to be seen as a very difficult and fraught negotiation. Baddie Chairman has asked CA Chairman till Sunday to come up with an agreement otherwise it all goes to a vote in the assembly. No one wants a vote so you can be sure on Sunday there will be a final agreement on the need to come to an agreement.



It now looks like no one had actually invited the Hoxahist faction led by Baidya, Badal and Deb to Hatiban, but they gate-crashed anyway and started taking the discussions off on a tangent. Henceforth, the leaders should lay down the ground rules that in such meetings all sat phones, mobiles and bugging devices should be turned off. In



Hatiban, Comrade God apparently started sending out group SMSs to comrades down in the city that Chairman Terrifico had sold out. The text messages started getting cc-ed all over the place, triggering a chain reaction, and came a full circle to make PKD's smart phone vibrate like mad. If this is what happens with just SMS, imagine if the Gang of Four also tweeted.



Everyone who thinks these figures of famous Commies in Paris Danda should be Nepal's next big tourist sightseeing attraction, raise your hands. Stalin himself must be turning in his mausoleum to find his name being invoked in Nepal to justify Soviet-style federalism. When Baidya Buda Ba said at

the Hatiban meeting "Comrade Stalin would have worked towards ethnic autonomy just like he did in setting up autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics" he was greeted with howls of laughter from fellow communists present. It fell upon Comrade Leftist God to remind Buda Ba that Uncle Joe was responsible for the deaths of 20 million people in the Gulags, but no one brought up how many Chinese people died in Mao's own Great Leap Forward. Just goes to show what a time warp our netas live in.



When asked by UNMIN in 2007 what happened to all the weapons, Awesome famously said they had been "carried away by the river". In the

Shaktikhor Tape, he boasted to his cadre: "What do they think I am, stupid, to hand over all our guns? And we fooled the UN into thinking we have 35,000 guerrillas." Now, it looks like Chairman Desperado is paranoid that Baidya's Boys have got hold of the guns that were buried. What goes around, as the famous adage goes, comes around.



The number of guerrillas first fell from 35,000 to 19,000 in the cantonments, then to 9,000 after that to 6,500 who said they want to be integrated. Now less than 2,500 want to join the army. Which begs the question, what happened to the salary and allowances allocated in the past five years to 19,000 ladakoos in the cantonments

of which the Maobad Party took a Rs 2,000 levy each? And for all those years, 4,000 phantom fighters who were never in the camps also received their money and that entire amount went to the party coffers. And now, because most gorillas don't want to go into the army anyway, the enlarged rehab package is going to cost us tax payers another 9 arabs.



On the week when parliament is for the first time in the history of modern Nepal debating a sexual harassment in the workplace bill, former Maoist health minister Amik Sherchan has disclosed that he used to get delegations of women with various demands who would get all touchy feely and threaten to molest him if he didn't give in to their demands. All we can say is that the ex-minister was in a win-win situation. If he gave in to their demands, he'd probably have got a peck on his cheeks, and if he didn't he'd be groped.



So this is what it has come to: the prime minister's sister-in-law and the Army Chief's brother-in-law are both in the Selection Committee of the Special Committee.





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