NO FLY ZONE

This plane junkyard at a corner of Kathmandu airport is a powerful symbol of the state of Nepal. These vintage aircrafts were once the mainstay of the nation’s aviation, and are a mute testament to political interference that bled the national airline dry, and businessmen who bankrupted their airlines and looted shareholders. The planes lie scavenged and neglected, just like the country whose faded flag they still fly.

Corner people

Half the 50 families in Olangchungola in the remote northeastern corner of Nepal have left. The rest are preparing to leave this neglected, harsh land. Offered no relief after last September’s earthquake, locals feel they have nothing left to lose.

Photo Feature by Krishna Sinjali page 12-13

nepaltimes.com

For photo galleries of stories in this issue.
MILITARY SECURITY VS SOCIAL SECURITY

H ow come the countries that can’t feed their populations have lately started testing long-range ballistic missiles? India fired a guided missile last week and is expected to test a nuclear payload as far as Beijiang and North Korea’s rocket turned out to be as unguided as a week that can deliver a nuclear payload as far as Beijing, and irradiate the perimeters of their domains. That is why we with expanding and defending territory shows we have sacrosanct frontiers of nation states. Our obsession about ordinary people, they ignore descriptions of the history of nation states are annals of military conquests, whereas the history of empires have been based on the glorious everyday life and the sacrifice made by citizens during the welfare of their citizens do so, too. Part of the reason democratic leaders supposedly accountable to the masses for so long are shocked and dominated by Nepali men has to end. Where were the female leaders during the deep grievances of those travelling the country post 27 May. Where were the female leaders during the peace process offers the opportunity to turn our attention to the state’s neglect of its citizens. For Nepal’s long-term peace, underlying social injustice, discrimination, exclusions and inequities must be addressed. Maintaining an outsized, expensive army drains resources away from human development. The Nepali nation’s survival from foreign intruders, but from domestic instability caused by the state’s neglect of its citizens.

Military security trains people to kill other people, human security is about saving people’s lives.

When it comes to the army, even the most democratic nations shroud them in inordinate secrecy, they give the brass unquestioned leeway, and a lavish budget. Numerically, South Asia has most of the world’s poor. If governments in our part of the world were really concerned about the welfare of their citizens, they would pay less attention to military security and pay more for social security. Traditionally, security has always been about training people to kill other people, whereas human security is about trying to save people’s lives. One of the early proponents of human security in South Asia was the late Mahnubh Ul-Haq who used figures and statistics to prove just how absurd the military budgets of India and Pakistan were in relation to the mass deprivation of citizens in both countries. If Pakistani leaders had listened to Ul-Haq and done more in the 1990s to encourage education with jobs, and health, perhaps the country wouldn’t be in the explosive political situation it is in today.

For Nepal, the successful conclusion of the peace process offers the opportunity to turn our attention to long-term peace building. An essential part of that must be to harness the peace dividend by cutting back on our bloated military budget, as well as investing in human security.

The induction of ex-Maoist combatants and extra Maoist into the army are political compromises, and make a mockery of the glaring need for Security Sector Reform. There is no reason to keep the Armed Police Force, the paramilitary army that was set up to fight the insurgency. And if we must have a military, its size must be slashed to focus on disaster relief, infrastructure and UN peacekeeping.

In the constitution debates, our leaders split hairs about presidential and parliamentary systems. But if we look around the region, we see democratic governments so beholden to their militaries that they have no money left for anti-poverty programs, but we also have governments that may not be democratic but have done a much better job in keeping military spending to ensure social welfare. We can have any kind of government we like, but it must put human security at the top of the agenda.

For Nepal’s long-term peace, underlying social injustice, discrimination, exclusions and inequities must be addressed. Maintaining an outsized, expensive army drains resources away from human development. The Nepali nation’s survival from foreign intruders, but from domestic instability caused by the state’s neglect of its citizens.

JOURNALISM OF DECEPTION
Nepal Times is lucky to have a collection of founders, Rubeena Mahato (’journalism of deception’, #001). She has impacted many people’s lives through her writing and makes the paper better. I hope XT will give her all the tools she needs so that she can continue making Nepal proud.

Caroline K C

Thank you Rubeena Mahato for a brutally honest piece. I am sure you will go a long way in your career, if you are not forced to compromise your integrity or hounded by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists.

Party Peedit

In a country where ethics amongst journalists is a rarity, Mahato deserves kudos for an honest and hard-hitting piece.

Sail P

Let’s hope journalists stop merely rewarding press releases and doing more in-depth investigations, and asking tough questions of those with power (including themselves). JAMES

Rubeena Mahato, you encourage other women journalists to become leaders in the field rather than just following losers. I am a fan and look forward to reading more of your exceptional reports.

Shanta Gurung

Rubeena is a very brave woman. With the power of her pen, she can bring justice and help clean up the mess in the country. She is a true Nepal hero and has our full support.

Anjali Shrestha

GIVE AND TAKE
This is by far the most direct, honest and sound editorial that I have read in a long time (’Give and take’, #061). Thank you Nepal Times for this much needed clarity in a time of hush-hush nation building. As a Nepali I am happy that as far as Beijing is concerned, Nepal has crucially more clout a necessary condition for the peaceful coexistence, and we simply cannot afford to picture them in awe of us, and we nepalis seem to love it.

Srijana Shrestha

We can’t only blame politicians for pushing us into poverty, ethnic strife and authoritarianism. Who chose to support the Maoists, including Dahal and Bhattarai, as heroes of the poor? Who red-carpeted them to power and legitimised their violence? Who provided them the opportunity to organise a ‘New Constitution’? In those times when we already had a good one from 1990? Who chose to ignore all earning signs while highlighting the false ‘peace’ aspect? And who labelled those trying to express themselves as extremist, rightist, kafirs today? These same intellectuals, journalists, editors and opinion-makers who hoodwinked the masses for so long are shocked and surprised at the way things are turning out.

Satyajit Nepal

Your editorial is full of hypocrisy. Doesn’t Dahal want to become president through a directly elected system? If we think someone else can do a better job then we should vote for him or her. It’s as simple as that.

Krishna Sinha

The editorial is a wish-list.

Nirmal Gautam

Current events, possible results and geopolitics have been totally ignored. Can we be more realistic, please?

K K Sharma

PRESIDENTIAL ROADSHOW
There is too much pessimism and intolerance among Nepal’s political leaders (’Presidential roadshow for unity’, ‘Kunda Dixit’, #061). By directly reaching out to the masses, President is transcending party lines and ethnic ideologies and ideologies and helping reaffirm true patriotism, I think you are absolutely incorrect, but I feel Yadav has played his presidential role perfectly.

Door

Do we need someone to think about the whole of Nepal and its collective identity and the President has articulated this sentiment very well. Although there will be critics and controversies at every step, Yadav should just ignore and carry on with his bold moves.

Southa

For someone holding the highest ceremonial position, the time I feel Yadav has disappointed. But we shouldn’t expect too much from him. He became the president not because of his capabilities but rather because of the ego war between PK Dahal and KP Oli. Rajesh Prapaijl

President Yadav’s ‘dharma’ sounds like King Gyanendra’s rhetoric of ‘raj dharma’. As the first president of republican Nepal, he needs to ensure that Nepal is not a Titan where only those travelling first class survive.

Nirmal Gautam

ASS FANS
Ass, you are great (’Crosing the fan’, #060). Keepingpressuring our failed and corrupt leaders through your satire. Who knows, maybe you will inspire someone honest to take charge.

Deepak Sharma

The Ass is a popular among students in the US, and we read Nepal Times just to see what you have to say. You are the only one who can provide joy and sadness at the same time.

Gopal Subedi

Although the gender roles are reversed, the Ass makes it sound like (the) sex is the sexual harassment is not a big deal and that people should welcome it, which is precisely the mindset of men when they wolf-whistle and can’t understand why the humor is not a big deal and that people should welcome it, which is precisely the mindset of men when they wolf-whistle and can’t understand why

Henny
The presidential form of governance has its pros and cons, but I am not sure it suits Nepal. In France a candidate for the presidency is simply French. In Nepal, any candidate besides being a Nepali citizen, will also belong to a particular ethnic group and a particular caste. The danger then is that electoral competition will oppose not only two or more men but also, willingly or unwillingly, two or more ethnic groups or castes. Victory will then be the victory of one group and defeat for others. If one wants to protect the unity of Nepal, the parliamentary form of governance seems to be a much better option. This is the system which was in force during the period of constitutional monarchy from 1991 and it worked reasonably well. The only difference, now that the monarchy is abolished, lies in the election of a ceremonial president by parliament who embodies the unity of Nepal and Nepalis in all their diversity.

The second point of contention is federalism, which in itself is a positive form of governance. It gives the people the possibility of finding local and better adapted solutions to the problems they are confronted with. It takes the administration much closer to the citizens when the central government is too often far away and tends to be oblivious of their daily needs.

Despite these benefits, however, there are difficulties. To be effective, federal states or provinces have to recruit good and skilled staff capable of running the day-to-day administration. Also, defining federal units by ethnicity is very risky for Nepal and has the potential to split the country. A few ethnicities may be satisfied but many others, too small to get their own province, will resent the new administrative divisions as not responding to their needs and aspirations. The best form of federalism for Nepal should be based on economic criteria where regions are regrouped in a way that allows different ethnic groups to work together to lift their populations out of poverty in cooperation with neighbouring regions.

Michel Lummaux served as ambassador of France to Nepal between 1996 and 2000. The views in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect the French government’s position.
Old planes lie scattered, scavenged, cannibalised, picked clean for spare parts of airliners that were once a part of Nepal’s aviation history.

Of the 10 abandoned planes in this aviation junkyard is the veteran of the Nepal skies: “Alpha Uniform” one of the very first Hawker Siddeley 748 manufactured in 1969 and acquired by Royal Nepal Airlines.

It’s a story of how far we have regressed in Nepal that the then head of Royal Nepal Airlines is said to have got the manufacturer in 1970 to cut the price by 15 per cent by getting Hawker Siddeley to agree to minus the sales commission. Alpha Uniform with its sister ship, “Alpha Victor” served RNAC well, flying international routes to Delhi and domestic destinations as well as the popular Mt Everest sightseeing flights for more than 25 years.

Victor is stored at the Nepal Airlines hangar, but Uniform is here rotting away slowly in the sun with other planes from the private airlines that flew high briefly after privatisation in 1990 and then went belly-up. The planes of Royal Nepal Airlines, Necon Air, Nepal Airways, Everest Air and Cosmic Air are a mute testimony to the political interference that bled the national airline dry, and the unscrupulous tycoons who looted shareholder investment.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) seems to be aware that the plane junkyard is unsightly and is offering them up for auction to scrap dealers. Some of the private airlines still owe CAAN millions in unpaid fees, but they may have to be written off. Only Yeti Airlines has agreed to remove its SAAB 42.

The airline companies are supposed to pay accumulated parking fees,” says Shyam Sundar Bhakta Shrestha deputy managing director of the airport, “but since the planes are junked there is no chance of getting operators to pay up.” CAAN has received bids for only two of the Nepal Airways Y-12s and no one seems to want the Dorniers, Fokker 100 and other planes even to sell to aluminium scrap merchants. Nepal Airlines wants to hand over the other Avro to the proposed Civil Aviation Academy.

The reason scrap dealers are not interested is because whatever they bid for, the airline will first have to clear its dues to CAAN. Cosmic Air alone owes the airport Rs 20 million. Shrestha says the planes will be removed if there are no bids and the space leased to private airlines which need hangar space.

More pictures: www.nepalitimes.com
Eeducated, but unskilled

New Nepal needs to have a consciously skill-centric focus on creating and sustaining jobs

For the last five years, as a part of my work in two different organisations, I’ve been on panels that select and hire new employees. At both places, I’ve been struck by how much discussion there is about a candidate’s education and experience or lack thereof, and how little about the candidate’s skills, as in what the person can actually do.

In the national conversation about creating jobs, there is a stronger emphasis on setting up more BBA and BBS colleges and more universities which award degrees in specialised-sounding, if of dubious value, subjects. Indeed, in the last one year alone, people in eastern and far western Nepal have actually rioted to pressurise the government to establish universities in their areas.

All this is not surprising. A bias that is firmly entrenched in our minds from the era of the failed New Education Reform Plan of 1971 is that we continue to equate, both socially and culturally, the act of acquiring an education in a formal setting culturally, the act of acquiring skills to equate, both socially and culturally, the act of acquiring skills to.

This is why, in New Nepal, we need to have consciously skill-centric focus on creating and sustaining jobs for most people. These skills could be about plumbing, carpentry, bakery, and the like on one hand, and about being medical, dental and hydropower technicians on the other.

For this, the government needs to look for ways to raise the importance of institutions such as CTEVT by offering more funds, by facilitating their linkages with reputed foreign counterparts, and by making it easier for any interested party to start and run accredited technical and vocational institutes in places in Nepal where there is demand. It is Nepal with skills to sell to the market who will help make their families, their communities and their country prosperous.

Past Strictly Business columns
www.nepalitimes.com

Home sweet home
On the occasion of New Year 2069, Bank of Asia is introducing its Easy Home scheme. This scheme provides customers with 100 percent loans to purchase lands, buildings, apartments and for construction or renovation purposes at an interest rate of 11.99 per cent.

Accolades abound
Qatar Airways has been honoured with two major accolades at the annual Skytrax World Airport Awards held in Vienna. For the second year in a row, Qatar Airways’ Premium Terminal at Doha International Airport (DIA) was named the World’s Best Premium Service Airport and Qatar Airways-owned Oryx Rotana, a five-star hotel at Doha International Airport won the Best Airport Hotel in the Middle East award. Qatar Airways has been ranked 10th best airport hotel in the world.

BIZ BRIEF

Yeti Airlines flies with BAE’s Jetstream 41; World’s best turboprop plane.

Yeti Airlines operates Jetstream-41 (J-41) the latest in line of turbo prop planes made by British Aerospace (BAE). With over 500 aircrafts built to date, the BAE’s J-41 is a particular choice for feeder lines in as many as 12 airlines across the world. The best in its class, the BAE’s J-41 is also a top-notch aircraft for private corporate flyers. What’s more, Yeti Airlines’ J-41 aircrafts are fully supported round-the-clock by a certified crew in its own CAAP approved hangar.

Yeti Airlines operates 7 Jetstream-41 advanced turbo prop aircrafts catering to widest network sectors every day.

Yeti Airlines operates a fleet of 11 aircrafts which include the Turbo Propeller Aircrafts, Jetstream J41, and the turboliners, the Boeing 737 and B767.

Yeti Airlines www.yetiall.com

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Friends of conservation

BHRIKUTI RAI

When the Friends of Zoo started a program to encourage school children to visit Jawalakhel Zoo 15 years ago, it met with a lot of skepticism. Nepal’s only zoo at that time didn’t have much to show for itself. The cages were small and smelly, and it was an example of how not to run a zoo. Today, Friends of Zoo (FOZ) is a showcase for conservation awareness in the country, helping promote a wildlife friendly culture among 300 member schools in the Valley and surrounding districts.

The central zoo at Jawalakhel is not just home to animals but also a leading centre for conservation education.

TRISHNA RANA

30 percent of the population still can’t read or write, so making children attend school is the biggest priority for parents, teachers and the government in Nepal. Then there are problems like high dropout rate, an increasing gap between private and public schools, a lack of classroom resources, shortage of trained teachers, and sexual harassment.

School bullying comes way down in the list of problems, although all indications are that there is an epidemic of abuse of school children by fellow students. Most schools don’t even acknowledge the problem exists.

“When we approach schools and request them to introduce anti-bullying policies, the principals and teachers become very defensive and tell us it does not happen in their schools, they are afraid that if they admit to bullying, their reputation will be damaged,” says Niti Rana, chairperson of Rakshya Nepal.

Bullied children in Nepal are trapped between their tormenters and an insensitive school system.

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Bullied children in Nepal are trapped between their tormenters and an insensitive school system.

which is dedicated exclusively to minimising the effects of bullying.

Children are also reluctant to admit to bullying to teachers or parents because they are scared of the consequences or have no faith that it would make things better. This secrecy surrounding bullying makes it very hard to determine the frequency, assess the severity and push for timely intervention.

The responsibility then falls on the teachers and parents to pick up on signs that their children might be being bullied, or are bullying others. Psychologists and child development experts agree that children who are bullied are usually physically fragile, weak in academics, shy, don’t speak up in class, have lower self esteem or a combination of these factors.

Rima Pradhan, a student counsellor at a school in Kathmandu, says potential bullies can also be identified and begin to display signs starting from first grade. She explains, “Children who are larger and stronger than rest of their classmates when they are six or seven years old are most likely to become bullies in their teenage years, they start with innocent acts like pinching their friends and then move on to more violent and hurtful activities.”

Among girls there is a greater tendency to isolate and exclude the victim by not talking or playing with her. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to kit or push the victim while in the football grounds or calling (“fat”, “ugly”, “dark”, “stupid”), ragging victims to complete assignments, stealing possessions, or forcefully pairing them with someone of the opposite sex are also common bullying behaviours.

Ganga Pathak, chief psychologist at the National Institute of Psychology in Baneshwor, says that despite warning signs, detecting that a child is being bullied is still tricky. She explains, “We find that many teenagers who come for counselling because of their
aggressive, violent behaviours or because of depression are actually victims of bullying and their anger and depression is only an external expression of their frustration. Many younger children’s emotional well being, these outward emotions, so it’s hard for parents and teachers to know what’s wrong."

While intervention by parents and teachers helps in the short term, empowering the children is a better way to deal with bullying. Samruti Chimire at Ankur Counselling Centre says, “We try to build assertiveness among children who are bullied and teach them how to protect themselves. We also conduct workshops which help boost self-esteem. These skills are far more beneficial for children in the long run.”

Bullying is often dismissed as part of growing up, and the focus is completely on students getting good grades or being the best athletes. Both Pathak and Ghimire say attitudes of urban parents and schools are slowly changing and they are paying more attention to children’s social-emotional well being.

Rana who is the first Nepali to research bullying points to the apathy shown by schools as the biggest hurdle: “Schools don’t consider bullying a serious issue, but even easy and inexpensive measures like including an anti-bullying policy in the student handbook, adding a section on school bullying in teacher training manuals, starting an anti-bullying week campaign to raise awareness will go a long way in improving students’ well being.”

Pathak goes a step further and recommends mandatory orientation programs for new students in every school where they are taught what bullying is, its consequences and who to go for help. And adds, “Typically hostels have a post called ‘discipline in charge’ who is usually someone who students are scared of and avoid. Schools should get rid of this position and hire trained counsellors instead. Even parents need to play an active role and should talk to their children about bullying at the beginning of the school year.”

The Department of Education has no policies on school bullying and is completely silent on the issue. Rana’s suggestion: “The government could start by finding a Nepali term for the word bullying. At the moment we don’t even know what to call it in Nepali.”

**A least bit different**

For 20 years, I thought I was the problem. I blamed myself for the name calling, the physical abuse, for being helpless. But today after all these years, I can talk openly and honestly about bullying. I went to St Xavier’s, an all boys school where classmates taunted me for being different. But I believe people who bully usually have problems within their family or have been bullied at some point in their lives. It’s a vicious circle.

I consider myself lucky. I came from a privileged family background and had a very strong support system. Usually boys tend not to share their emotions with their parents, but I was extremely close with my parents and siblings and they stood by me throughout those rough years.

In hindsight, I can say that my experience with bullying has gotten me to the position where I am today. Since I was already different, I was free to experiment with new and unusual fields. I chose a profession like fashion designing and have made a name for myself. In the end, my life has turned out to be positive.

I wanted to show the documentary Bully to children and teachers in Nepal because the experience of being bullied cuts across geography, race and class. The pain and hurt is the same. And although I am not an expert, I want to tell parents with children who have been bullied to keep communication channels open and tackle the issue as early as possible.

Prabal Gurung
Prabal Gurung is a Nepali American fashion designer based in New York. On a visit to Nepal a month ago he organised the screening of the new documentary, Bully, at Rato Bangala School.

**Tormented teens**

Directed by Lee Hirsch, Bully depicts the epidemic of school bullying across the US through the lives of 13-year-old boy from Iowa who is called ‘fish face’ and physically harassed by his peers on the bus; a lesbian in Oklahoma who finds acceptance hard to come by in her small town; and a honour student in Mississippi, who is sent to juvenile prison for pointing a gun at her tormentors. The documentary also follows the grieving families of Tyler Long and Ty Smalley, victims of bullying who killed themselves. As the families try to raise awareness and make school administrators more responsive and accountable, they are met with a lot of resistance and the children are left to navigate their way through the incredibly hostile world of bullies all on their own.

The film released in US theatres on 30 March, www.thebullyproject.com

**Cover story**

Road to nowhere:
The constitution, even if drafted may not lead the nation out of transition

**Editorial**
Thorny issues

**Commentary**
Federalism Feud
Bihari Krishna Shrestha
Beyond intortion
Jaimendra Jha
Spacious Madhes
Chandrakishor Jha

**Reports**
Exclusive inclusion
Stranged in a foreign land
On fast-track
Silent success

**Interview**
Dev Gurung
Central committee member, UCPN-M

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**HIMAL**
Khabarpatrika
April 28 - May 13 2012

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**EVENTS**

Dutch Queen’s Day, be a part of a special flea market where you can buy or sell used products. Rs 600 (for stalls), starts from 30 April, 12:30 pm to 6 pm, Summit Hotel, Kupondole.

**DINING**

**ROME'S -**"A touching (not)to touch". Enjoy Agile Italian layered pizzas and pastas. Puspa Kasem, Lazimpat.

**ART & WINE**

**27 APRIL - 3 MAY 2012**

**LIFE TIMES**

**MOUNTAINS AND FLOWERS OF THE SACRED KHUMBU VALLEY,** water colour paintings by Bishokhari Jamsung Wangmoo depicting the serene beauty of Khumbu, 27 April to May 6, Park Gallery, Pulchowk. 10:30 am to 6 pm. Call 5522307

**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**

**NEPPEST: BEGINNING OF THE END**, the 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

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

**EXPHRASIS**, an art performance showcasing poetry, music, acts and fashion which will be followed by an art exhibition by Milan Rai. 5 May, 7pm, Trishana, Lazimpat

**NEPAL TIMES**

India-Nepal Crafts Festival, organised by Embassy of India in association with Government of Goa, B.P.Koirala India-Nepal Foundation and South Asia

**CHONGQING FAST FOOD**, gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. Thamel

**SAL’S PIZZA**, almost round, almost cheap, always delicious, try out the cheesiest pizzas in town. Lazimpat, behind Jazz Uptairs

**ACHALY**, an authentic Italian restaurant which serves dishes like Pizza Quatro Stagioni and Spaghetti alla Puttanseca. Thamel

**DRAGON CAFE**, enjoy momos, sizzlers and vegetable coins at the most reasonable prices. Kamalpat

**FUJI BAKERY**, tucked in Chakupat this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat and banana cake. Chakupat

**THE OLIVE GARDEN**, now offering a revamped dinner menu with various trout dishes. Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat

**ALFRESCO**, for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999

**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

**THE BAKERY**, enjoy two of the best bakery in town's bestsellers. One Round, almost cheap, always delicious, try out the cheesiest pizzas in town. Lazimpat, behind Jazz Uptairs

**ACADEMY**, Free entry

**27 APRIL TO 2 MAY, NEPAL TIMES**
Dharan doesn’t boast of many fine dining options. But as a first time visitor to the city, friends told me to include ‘lunch at Nirvana Golf Club’ on my to-do list. Located inside the vast compound of BP Memorial Hospital, Nirvana Country Club Health and Golf Resort is lush and beautiful - a cool oasis.

Nirvana Golf Club

Yellow Chili, enjoy renowned chef Sanjeev Kapoor’s dishes as this restaurant serves mouthwatering Indian delicacies. Thapathali

Japanese Crepe Station, try the unique Nepali khawa crepe for a quick fix. Khichapokhari and Basantapur, call 4266655

The Borderlands Eco Adventure Resort, raft in the mighty Bhote Kosi, try a canyon descent, or an off-the-beaten track to a hidden monastery. Call 4700884

The saving grace of our meal arrived

to the basics: serving good, wholesome, tasty meals. The lassis were warm and not well blended. Chunks of yogurt in the mouth do not make for a pleasurable drinking experience. Although the staff was very polite and helpful, the service was painfully slow. The ice we asked for came after we had almost finished drinking our warm glasses of what can be best described as mush. Having decided to skip starters, we ordered the ‘Nirvana Special Sandwich’, vegetable shashlicks and chicken basket. Our waiter encouraged us to try the Nepali Thali set which at Rs 525 a plate, seemed expensive for what was described as mush.

Nirvana wants to please everyone

Expecting vegetables skewered and grilled, served over a bed of rice, but what we got instead was a mix of boiled vegetables dunked in thick white sauce. The chicken in the basket was crisply fried, but drowned in a thick congealed sauce, accompanied by unpalatable French fries and plain boiled noodles. I judge a restaurant by its quality of fries and it’s shocking how many get it all wrong. A classic plate of French fries is crisp on the outside but after biting into the potato, yields a rich smooth softness - a clash of textures that makes this a perennial favourite. At Nirvana, we got served thick chunks of potatoes dripping in oil with no hint of crispiness anywhere.

The saving grace of our meal arrived with the Nepali Thali set. A heap of rice, thick dal, mixed vegetables with grated paneer, tomato chutney and chicken in creamy gravy finally had us satisfied.

Nirvana wants to please everyone and in its eagerness to make all patrons happy, it instead does just the opposite. The restaurant should downsize its menu, emphasise on what its chefs cook well and then bask in the collective sighs of appreciation from satisfied and satiated customers.

CINNAMON GRILL AND LOUNGE, mouth watering delicacies with live music. Try the grilled tenderloin steak and quiche lorraine with fresh fruit salad. Jhamalikhe, 5571399

MANNY’S EATERY AND BAR, special lunch packages for a quick snack or dinner. Lalitpur. Shaligram Complex, 5536919

NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT, relaxing ambience and good food. Don’t miss out on their Penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lazimpat, 44402957

HOLIDAY AT GRAND NORLING HOTEL, enjoy a quiet weekend at Gokarna. One night and two days at Rs 4500 and two nights and three days at Rs 7000, call 447948, Gokarna

Nirvana wants to please everyone

Walk for respect

Walk for Respect, the Nepali version of ‘slut walk’, is scheduled to take place this Saturday. The walk is part of UNDP’s global initiative to encourage men and women to stand up against sexual harassment and the first event took place in Toronto on 3 April 2011. The rally also aims to make victims more open about the trauma and shed their discomfort regarding issues of molestation.

The walk will begin at 1pm from Nepal Airlines Corporation building (next to New Road Gate) and end at Kathmandu Durbar Square. Call 9841375107 or SMS YUWA SW to 4001.

RUBENA D SHRISTHA in DHARAN

Picture: RUBEENA D SHRESTHA

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Walk for respect

Walk for Respect, the Nepali version of ‘slut walk’, is scheduled to take place this Saturday. The walk is part of UNDP’s global initiative to encourage men and women to stand up against sexual harassment and the first event took place in Toronto on 3 April 2011. The rally also aims to make victims more open about the trauma and shed their discomfort regarding issues of molestation.

The walk will begin at 1pm from Nepal Airlines Corporation building (next to New Road Gate) and end at Kathmandu Durbar Square. Call 9841375107 or SMS YUWA SW to 4001.

RUBENA D SHRISTHA in DHARAN

Picture: RUBEENA D SHRESTHA
**Eastern Promises**

**MUST SEE**

**Sophie Pande**

A self-admitted David Cronenberg fan from one of my previous articles, I have fallen back today on yet another superlative Cronenberg film upon finding that all DVD copies of Werner Herzog's seemingly promising documentary Into the Abyss (released in late 2011) stop 10 minutes short of the end.

Cronenberg has evolved from his days of psychological horror into a filmmaker who is now a film-maker, or really anyone who just loves a ripping good film—his characters every move is fascinating to watch. His 2007 masterpiece Eastern Promises, another superlative Cronenberg film upon which people can make an important diagnosis is put on a tilted slab of stone by his enigmatic driver Nikolai Lahiri (Mikael Persbrandt) for the first time.

When Anna returns home, Stepan has prudently transported a small part of Tatiana’s diary. It is clear that Tatiana was a young girl trafficked from Russia and held forcibly in a Russian motel brothel run by the infamous “Vory” wing of the mob. Even more distressingly, it seems that Tatiana had been raped by Kirill, Semeyon’s son. As Anna investigates, she is both warned and abetted by the inscrutable Nikolai whose intentions are still unclear. As we start to puzzle out the various twists in the intriguing plot, we are treated to a number of unforgettable scenes, one of which involves Mr Mortensen’s character, Nikolai, fighting off a pair of hired assassins, with deadly crushed knuckles, while stark naked in a Turkish bath.

Each character is truly fleshed out, Anna’s investigative drive is not arbitrary, as some main characters tend to be when excessively driven. Kirill turns out to be more of an abused son than an arch villain, and of course, there is the ever mysterious, Viggo Mortensen, who is able to make even a taciturn mob-driver into an amusing character whose every move is fascinating to watch.

In the end, Eastern Promises rises above its generic type counterparts because of its unfurling look into the heart of darkness. There is a world of evil out there and watching Eastern Promises, entertaining though it may be, does leave a chill in the heart, the last scene in particular.

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

**The erratic pulse**

**DHANVANTARI**

Buddha Basnyat, MD

But taking the pulse and making an important diagnosis is very common not only in Ayurvedic but also in Greek, Tibetan, Chinese, and Islamic medicine. In these traditional medical systems, problems in the intestines, liver, gall bladder, kidneys, lungs and brain are determined through careful assessment of the radial pulse. Even psychological health is determined by the pulse. Avicenna, the famous Islamic physician of the tenth century used the pulse as a lie detector to figure out that a sultan’s sick wife was actually pining for her lover and that nothing else was wrong with her. This is akin to the scene in countless Hindi movies where the doctor after studiously taking the pulse of a beautiful, unmarried woman and performing no other tests passes gravely to the parents, “Aapki beti ma baane hai wali” (your daughter is pregnant).

In modern medicine, doctors use the pulse to determine the seriousness of an illness as just one of the important means of assessing the patient. Light reflexes in the eyes, response to any kind of stimuli (especially pain), breathing, blood pressure are some of the important parameters besides pulse which are included in the assessment. But figuring out the exact time of death is still scientifically very important. For example harvesting the organs for donation from people who have given consent needs to be done immediately after death to optimize the chances for the organ to work in another patient. Perhaps with some fine tuning, the roles of ghata vaidyas could be expanded to include the practice of organ harvesting when Nepal is ready for this.

**WEEKEND WEATHER**

FRIDAY

SUNDAY

SATURDAY

31-16

29-15

29-15

31-16

29-15

29-15

**MOTORCYCLE TANKS READY, GET SET, GO:** Motorcyclists are finally allowed to fill up their tanks, after waiting in queue for several hours infront of the Army gas station at Bhadrakali.

**DIVINE GAZE:** The Living Goddess Kumari looks on during the Rato Machindranath Nati Jatra in Patan which started on Wednesday. The chariot festival is celebrated in honour of the rain god.

**WE THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:** Women from the Tamang community gather at Khutamanch on Wednesday for an event celebrating indigenous people.

**WELL DONE:** Shaih Handan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum hands over the 2012 UNESCO Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers to Shanta Dixit, president of the Rato Bangala Foundation. The event was held in UAE on Tuesday.
The ongoing constitutional debate has yielded positive results and the parties have further threshed out their differences. After having resolved the issues of constitutional court and citizenship, the leaders have left the hardest part for last.

On one side of the negotiations are the Maoists and Madhesi parties who want a clear departure from the parliamentary system, which they say has bred political instability and corruption in the past. The NC and UML are convinced that parliamentary system with all its flaws is still better than gambiling with an untested system that may breed a dictator.

So, as the deadline for the statute drafting draws closer, the parties are nervous about backtracking from positions that may give the opposition an upper hand in the debate. But they also know the other side is not going to relent either, and both sides know the perils of a void. It is against this backdrop that a new consensus is being forged.

NC negotiators realise that the Maoists will not give up their demand for a directly-elected executive president, and have agreed to it in return for a prime minister with executive powers elected by the parliament. In a departure from the French model, this is the Finnish model. But whatever model we chose, it will only be as good (or as bad) as the players.

Given our immature political milieu and protracted lawless transition, any dual power centre is going to lead to a power struggle between future executives. This is not to say we go back to the old ways of letting parliament elect an executive whose entire tenure would then be spent under the burden of its grace. The loyalty of such an executive lies with selective power brokers inside and outside the parliament, and not with the people. While it is essential to ensure that the executive is an upright individual free from any personal obligations, it is equally important to avoid power deadlocks resulting from overlapping arrangements. No matter how powerful, a parliament-elected executive will have little moral ground to exercise authority over a directly-elected president.

In an effort to seek a ‘win-win’ arrangement, the parties must not settle for something that will make us all losers.

If they are sincere about a consensus, one side will have to take a step back. An executive, be it a president or a prime minister must be directly elected to ensure accountability.

The other office could be a parliament-elected nominal head. In case the parties agree on a directly-elected prime minister, the president can be given certain emergency powers clearly stating the circumstances under which they can be exercised. Or if they agree on a directly-elected president, a prime minister elected by the parliament can be given a stronger legislative role as a leader of the house. To limit the power of future presidents, their tenure in office can be limited to a maximum of two terms. Also, a strong impeachment mechanism can be put in place as further safeguard.

The other knot to untie is over federalism. The leaders of indigenous groups including those in the CA have taken to the streets demanding ethnic federalism. From the early days of statute drafting, it was clear that state restructuring would be the most difficult problem to resolve. Federalism based on devolution and identity has been at the core of political movements in this country over the years.

All this is being decided hush-hush behind closed doors with the clock ticking. If the parties ignore Madhesi, Dalit and Janajati groups during the final negotiations on federalism, there will be street protests instead of celebrations on 28 May. The Madhesi front has already shown willingness to openly discuss alternative proposals based on identity and sustainability. The leaders must now engage indigenous pressure groups as well.

Until now the parties have been involved in a competition for brownie points. Engaging with one of their own and coming to terms with the demands of others will test their true negotiation skills.
A village near the north-eastern tip of Nepal was once on the busy and historical trade route with Tibet. Located at 3,100 m on the Tamur River, Olangchungola is named after the local inhabitants, the Walungs who were refugees from Tibet. Although most now have Nepali citizenship, they still retain a Tibetan way of life, speak their own language and have kin on the other side in China.

It takes a day’s bus ride from Birtamod to Taplejung’s district headquarter, and then a three-day trek to reach Olangchungola but the newly built airport 10 km east of Fungling will shave off an entire day. The road from Fungling to Tapethok and further up is under construction. Other than the road and abandoned VDC buildings and a primary school, there is little here to suggest presence of the Nepali state. The once vibrant trading route is deserted. A nine member border police force is

The corner people of Olangchungola

A village in the remote mountains of north-eastern Nepal makes a distress call

TEXT and PICS by KRISHNA SINJALI in SANKHUWASABHA
posted here, two days walk from the Reiyu post on the Tibet border which is often closed.

The primary school, which has 22 students opens for only four months because it is too cold for the teachers rest of the time. The locals have repeatedly asked the local administration to stock the health post with medicine and a doctor all year round. But nothing has materialised.

The 250 population of Olangchungola is scattered across seven VDCs and is made up mostly of farmers and traders. Half the population has left. Tibet is closer than the nearest market town in Nepal, and Chinese goods are cheaper than commodities in Nepal. But last September’s earthquake damaged the Tamur trail, and Tibet is not accessible. Repairs are nowhere in sight. The Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Project volunteer Tashi Sherpa says the route to Olangchungola is so bad it is swept away every monsoon. Neglected by the state, the 25 families still remaining in Olangchungola are also considering leaving the area for good. A local health assistant Pasang Kipa Sherpa told us they have requested the district administration to relocate the village to a safer place. She adds: “The area is too harsh for survival and there is no help from anywhere.”

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Hands-out scholarships
Naya Patrika, 22 April

Foreign embassies in Nepal are flouting diplomatic norms by distributing scholarships without the permission of Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The Indian embassy distributes more than 2000 scholarships every year. Pakistan has an annual quota reserved for 15 Nepali students pursuing MBBS. These scholarships which should have been distributed through MoE are doled out like kickbacks from embassies, often to children and relatives of high-ranking government officials and political leaders. Very few seats are left for open competition while most are given to favoured candidates. Chairperson of Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee, Padmalal Bishwakarma says that embassies have ignored their directive to distribute education assistance only through MoE. More than 50 seats for MBBS which come from China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are distributed as ‘cultural quotas’ without free competition. Government officials admit that politicians frequently visit embassies to secure scholarships for their children. And this is the main reason why no one is keen on regulating the embassies and making these scholarships more accessible.

Dubious donor policy
Ram Bahadur Rawal, Nepal, 20 April

In the past, donor countries would provide assistance to Nepal through INGOs. However, lately they have started opening ‘puppet’ companies and organisations to mobilise their resources. Such practices violate international norms, Nepal’s foreign aid policy and the commitments expressed by donors.

Although donors deny these allegations, organisations such as Rupantaran started by DFID prove that benefactors are now micromanaging Nepal’s development sector. The donors have been criticised in the past for ignoring local participation and bringing in projects without assessing ground realities.

Finance secretary, Krishna Hari Baskota says the donors put forth unnecessary terms and conditions and if the government questions them, they work clandestinely through NGOs affiliated with Social Welfare Council. The donors have also been insisting on bringing their own consultants citing the lack of expertise in Nepal, but Baskota says, “They must not doubt our capabilities and should use official channels when offering assistance.”

War school
Annapurna Post, 22 April

Shahid Smriti Boarding School in Manpur of Dang district is providing opportunities to children of parents who were killed, disappeared, injured or maimed during the conflict. Hemraj Sharma, a member of the school’s administration committee says that 90 percent of the 350 students currently enrolled at Shahid Smriti have either been affected by the war or are children of political activists who earn meagre wages. Children from Manpur study free of cost and underprivileged students are even provided food while others pay a nominal fee of Rs 200 per month. School principal Basanta Raj Adhikari says students who study at Shahid Smriti till grade 8 have the option to transfer to Jankalyan Higher Secondary School in Dudhara and live in the hostel.

Green revolution
Prem Narayan Acharya, Annapurna Artha, 23 April

The hands that once held weapons are now ploughing the fields. Hemnath Bhusal of Arghakhachi has left the path of bloody revolution and now dreams of green revolution.

Bhusal does not want to pick up weapons anymore and has refused to go take part in the integration process. “Revolution does not necessarily come through the barrel of the gun,” he explains. Convinced that it is not possible to change the country overnight, he has returned to his village with hopes of improving local livelihood through agriculture.

Bhusal has rented 1.5 hectares of land for five years in Thada VDC and begun commercial vegetable farming. He says proudly, “I have sold vegetables worth Rs 250,000 in the last eight months.”

The farmer says he chose agriculture because he wanted to show the villagers that it is possible to make fortunes on their own soil instead of toiling abroad. “Young people in Arghakhachi are inspired by his determination,” admits local social worker Motilal Belbase.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK
During our 99 day journey through mountains and plains we met people who shared their optimism and trust in change. It is their message of hope for change we wish to share.

Everest summitner Apa Sherpa quoted in Nagarik, 25 April
Maoists do the macarena

The website of the Organisation of the Worker’s Party of Afghanistan Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, Principally Maoist website (such an organisation exists, I kid you not, check out their website: www.mlprincipallymaoism.wordpress.com) has denounced Comrade Ass for suggesting Chairman (“Shining Path”) Gonzalo had written to our own Chairman (“Prachanda Path”) Lotus Flower to give up his own Chairman (“Prachanda”) in a previous column that Comrade Ass for suggesting the website of the www.mlmprincipallymaoism not, check out their website:

An organisation exists, I kid you not.

Guess that’s that, then. Still can’t figure out what, or who, LOL and ROL are, tho.

You think you were the only ones poking fun at the possibility of Comrade “Son Also Rises” Prakash having his nose amputated because his proboscis got frost-bitten even before he reached Base Camp during his bid to be the First First Son to climb Mt Everest? You think that is funny, huh? Then you should read the kind of jokes that have been circulating on the Facebook walls of pro-BBB and pro-Baidya factions of the Baddies. Some hint at the other appendages that may freeze over as Mr Prakash goes other appendages that may freeze over as Mr Prakash goes higher up the mountain. Others sympathise with the proletarian porters who will have to carry the Dear Leader up the Khumbu Icefall.

The pro-Badal Baddie mouthpiece Janadisha has been dishing out super galis on the establishmentist comrades led by BBB and PKD. The latest issue calls Comrade Chairman a “Red Traitor” and insinuates that Comrade Supersonic’s recent indisposition was caused not by a stomach upset, but cholera. The Manbuddhas didn’t even say this about their more intellectual insult.

Comrade Upadro seems to miss the point. He didn’t even say this about their more intellectual insult.

So the Babas have threatened a Dharma Yuddha if Nepal is not re-declared a Hindu Kingdom. Not to be outdone, NEFIN has threatened a Janajati jihad if there is no ethnic federalism. How many wars are we going to have in this country? Wish they’d tell us so we could be prepared.

Other tidbits:
- Jailed lawmaker Shyam Sundar Gupta has written to Speaker Nemang from his jail cell saying he wants his CA allowance, since he is still a member of the august house.
- Baidya Kaka told reporters he is against PKD being a directly-elected president because he feels it “might invite dictatorship”. Of the proletariat, perhaps?
- PKD was asked on Cuntipore TV if he preferred being called Prachanda or Pushpa Kamal. “I like Prachanda more than Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and you will see more of Prachanda as it signifies people’s aspirations for change.” Hey, Awesome, is that a threat?

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