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## Rainbow nation

**PEACE SIGN:** A rainbow arcs above the Peace Stupa in Pokhara ahead of Buddha Jayanti which falls on 6 May, Sunday.

SWORUP NHASUJURANIBAN RETREAT

With only three weeks to go for the constitution deadline, there is an ominous sense of foreboding about where we are headed. The terrorist attack in Janakpur in which Madhesis killed Madhesis and the double-barrelled strike that has shut off one-fourth of the country's territory in the Far West for a week now, indicates what we are up against: competing ethnicities within proposed future federal units resorting to violence. Only if politicians treat Nepal like a rainbow nation of multiple ethnicities will we avert a national tragedy.

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### GUEST COLUMN

by **Alok Kumar Bohara**

Nepal's political leaders could learn from chimpanzees who show greater enlightened self-interest that comes from cooperation.

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### THIS IS IT

by **Rubeena Mahato**

Us-vs-them ethno-chauvinism is drowning out the moderate, sane and rational voices.

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### BY THE WAY

by **Anurag Acharya**

It may sound like an oxymoron, but only rational politics can defuse the country's ethnic time bomb.

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### POKHARA PACKAGE

Pokhara survived the insurgency, political instability and frequent strikes. With politics looking up, tourism has rebounded.

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# FEDERAL EXPRESS

If ever there was a warning about the shape of things to come, none would be more portentous than the heinous act of terrorism in Janakpur on Tuesday. Four activists demonstrating peacefully for the recognition of Mithila identity were killed, supposedly by a Madhesi militant group.

The Far West of Nepal, one-fourth of the country, has been completely shut down now for a week in a double-barrelled strike by those for an against the far-western Tarai being a part of Tharuhat. The Tharus are also on a collision course with the Madhesis.

Elsewhere in the country, with only three weeks to go for the constitution deadline, there is an ominous sense of foreboding about the way we are headed. The Limbus are rising up against the Rais, the Newars and Tamang disagree on boundaries, as do Magars and Gurungs. Janakpur showed us what can happen if ethnicities compete over proposed provinces using terror and violence.

In the tinder dry terrain of Nepal's political summer, the conditions are right for a blaze that could rapidly engulf the whole country. We are not panic-mongering, or crying wolf. The younger leadership within the four political forces look on helplessly as their seniors steer the country towards disaster. This was summed up eloquently and succinctly in a short post in English by the NC's Gagan Thapa on his Facebook page on Wednesday: 'Trying hard, but things are getting worse.'

CA chairman Subhas Nembang had a message for the political leaders he summoned to his chamber on Tuesday. This is the time to show some statesmanship, he said, to rise above your personal and partisan ambitions,



**In the tinder dry terrain of Nepal's political summer, the conditions are right for a blaze that could rapidly engulf the whole country.**

to save the country from possible disintegration. But everyday we see new proof of the main political actors not being able to stand up to ethnic blackmail by powerful satraps. Others are actively using the ethnic and regional card to settle political scores, and for electoral advantage in future -- the country be damned.

You don't have to be a serial op-ed writer to see that carving up the country into states named after ethnic

groups will not address historical marginalisation, but fracture the country along ethnic faultlines. None of the models proposed so far will make all ethnic groups happy, everyone will feel shortchanged.

Fortunately, just in the nick of time, saner minds and cooler heads have prevailed. Brokered closely by India, a deal has been worked out for a unity government paving the way for a NC-led government by 27 May. But even if there is a consensus government, how does that guarantee a consensus on the contentious clauses in the constitution? In fact, a ministerial reshuffle will unleash the usual haggling over portfolios and distract everyone's attention from the urgent task of writing a least harmful constitution. If the past is any guide, there will be a singular lack of statesmanship during the give-and-take of government formation.

The political leaders who ultimately should be concerned about national unity and long-term stability are being swayed by non-gvernment pressure groups aided and abetted in the past by Nepal-based internationals in the name of equalising opportunity. It has now gone beyond the ability of the politicians to control cross-party divisionists in their ranks.

These sensitive and volatile issues should have been debated and sorted out in the last three years. But the leaders, in their infinite wisdom, have left the most intractable aspects of the constitution till the last three weeks. You can't order federalism express delivery.

Democracy and national unity are absolutes. You can't be half-democratic, or half-united. If the Indian partition proved anything it is that populist appeasement and short-term political expediency invite long-term disaster.

## ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

### MILITARY VS SOCIAL

Thank you for a thought-provoking editorial on human security (Military security vs social security, #602). But I think you are expecting too much from politicians in Nepal (and elsewhere).

**Peter S**

- This is the social security ordinary Nepalis want: food and shelter for the needy, quality education for all children, safety net for the elderly, equal rights and pay for women and minorities, jobs for the unemployed, and restoration of law and order. Will the new constitution provide us with these basic needs?

**Bishnu Ghimire**

- It's useless to talk about external security when the country is ready to blow up internally. It's too bad that criminals are in power and are protecting each other. We need to put some high profile politicians behind bars. Maybe that would teach others a lesson and we might finally see some change.

**Dinesh Gurung**

- I have zero faith in Nepal's leaders and don't think they are capable of solving the country's problems. These senile men are looting state coffers, corruption has taken centre stage, and there is no one to fight or speak against it. Nepalis need jobs, law and order, education and a better economic future. Let's first take care of internal security, all others will follow.

**Anil Sharma**

- We are tired of reading about the same worthless group of politicians over and over again. We want to hear good news for a change. The media should stop focusing on lies, deceptions and corruption and give

greater importance and space to stories of hard working Nepalis who are making a difference in people's lives at home and abroad.

**Nirmala Pradhan**

- Corruption is rampant, in the military, police, government, political parties, and has become a way of life for Nepalis. Are there no honest men and women who can stop this decay? The current lot of leaders should hang their heads in shame and a new generation needs to take over.

**Arun Khadka**

### COHABITATION

Michel Lummaux rightly points out that parliamentary system is the most compatible option for the country ('Dangers of cohabitation', #602). Although presidential and mixed systems have their merits, Nepal has nearly two decades of experience with parliaments. We are aware of the system's shortcomings and know what actions should not be repeated. And we can't afford to experiment for the next two decades, because the longer we experiment, the more deprived Nepalis will be. Actually, all systems are fine if engineered by good people. However, I'm not sure how far this gang of inept politicians can take us.

**Nirmal**

- I completely disagree with Lummaux's views. As an outsider, I don't think he realises that except for few upper-caste men, most other ethnic groups, lower castes and women in Nepal have been marginalised and deprived of social and economic services for centuries. Many Nepalis are demanding a federal system based on ethnicity so that their rights are protected and they no longer have to live as second-class

citizens in their own country.

**Raju**

- I don't understand why writers like Lummaux are troubled by a directly-elected executive leader? The former ambassador claims the previous system worked 'reasonably well' for Nepal. But Nepalis had absolutely no control over their political affairs for the last two decades. The old system is completely inefficient. Just look at how many prime ministers have ruled since 1990, or how many parliamentary meetings it takes to choose a PM, or the horse-trading that goes on in our parties every time they have to pick a PM.

**Krishna S**

- If Nepal adopts a federal model based on ethnicity, Nepalis will surely regret the decision in the future. I don't think such a system will work well and may lead to more internal conflicts. In the worst case scenario the country might even disintegrate.

**GG**

- Why are we looking to replicate models from other countries? What works in France or China may not necessarily work here. I think this 'copy cat' mentality is our biggest problem. Nepal needs to develop its own model.

**Ram Kuwar**

- I think a dictatorial leader might not be such a bad idea for Nepal. We need someone strong, who can control these corrupt thugs. A weak leadership can never deliver the progress we desire and we know this from our experiences of the past 20 years.

**Yanpras**

### OLD PLANES

It's a pity to see old, dead planes lying scattered in such miserable conditions

('Where old planes go to die', Dewan Rai, #602). The planes could be used to create an aviation museum and generate money. Children in Kathmandu would have a new place to visit and aviation activists could use the museum to raise awareness about flight safety, which is highly relevant in Nepal. Or they can be used for research purposes.

**Puspa**

- Thank you *Nepali Times* for raising an important issue. The plight of government owned cars and vehicles is also the same. The old ones have had their valuable parts stolen and people in ministries and state offices pretend not to know who took the parts. No one bothers to repair such vehicles, because it is more convenient and profitable to order new ones. This way, officials can pocket the windfall from vehicle purchase and also show off their prestige.

**Amrit Bhandari**

- Nepal Airlines like Nepal Oil Corporation are piggybanks for politicians and government officials. It's high time to sell them off.

**Shree Shrestha**

### OLANGCHUNGOLA

Thank you Krishna Sinjali for highlighting a part of Nepal that is far away from the state's purview ('The corner people of Olangchungola', #602). I hope NT includes more photo features such as this one in the future so that the blind state may retain its sight.

**Raju Lama**

### CONSERVATION

Although Animal Welfare Network Nepal welcomes the zoo's

conservation education efforts, it likes to remind the public that half the enclosures at the Central Zoo fail to meet minimum standards ('Friends of conservation', Bhrikuti Rai, #602). The welfare of Nepal's majestic wildlife is severely compromised by cramming them into congested cages in an inner city area. They deserve to be kept in a more natural environment in a spacious rehabilitation centre cum zoo. Conservation education makes little sense when zoo residents are living in substandard conditions and are constantly harassed by one million annual visitors. Ask Shiva the tiger.

**Pramada Shah**

### MACARENA

Ass, you just made my Friday and I love you ('Maoists do the macarena', Backside, #602). You are simply unparalleled.

**Nepali**

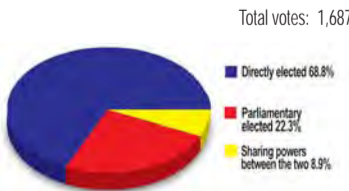
- Ass, you are very intelligent and funny. But avoid making sexist references like 'Cuntipore TV', because it is regrettably infectious.

**Henny**



Weekly Internet Poll #603

Q. What kind of executive is best suited for Nepal?



Weekly Internet Poll # 604. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think NC's decision to join the present government will help in drafting the constitution?



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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Chief Operating Officer: Sunim Tamang | Hattiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu | Desk Editor: Trishna Rana | Design: Kiran Maharjan  
editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5250333/845 Fax: +977-1-5251013  
Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma | rachanas@himalmedia.com | Advertorial/features: Ram Krishna Banjara | Subscription: Santosh Aryal | santosha@himalmedia.com  
Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapr.com



# Enlightened self-interest

Let's learn from the chimpanzees, who cooperate to survive



 **GUEST COLUMN**  
**Alok Bohara**

This week saw the release of *Chimpanzee*, a fascinating documentary about the life of a three-year-old chimp named Oscar which revealed how emotionally similar human and primate behaviour can be. The chimps in the Disney film understood the meaning of cooperation, the value of their diverse resource base, and remarkably, they also had a sense of empathy towards each other.

They built tools to harvest food, and passed on this knowledge to the younger generation. A healthy eco-system thrives on this principle of cooperation and biological diversity. This is how a community becomes resilient and builds coping capacity. The chimpanzee community knew how to make rational decisions not only to survive, but to thrive.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of higher primates, especially in present-day Nepal where political leaders show a lack of enlightened self-interest that comes from cooperation. Chimps evolved to favour genes

that promoted cooperation because the ones who worked together survived better than those who behaved selfishly.

The federal structure models promoted by the three main parties show how short-sighted and narrow-minded Nepal's political leadership continues to be. The NC's seven state model, the UML's seven or 12 state model (they have left it undetermined in classic flip-flop style) and the Maoists' ten-state model are all outcomes of closed door meetings. The past three years of consultations, suggestions from public hearings, and the advice of experts have all been ignored.

None of the three proposals take into account the emerging regional economic and geopolitical realities and the comparative advantages of our landscape, people, and resources. The separation of the Tarai from its natural watershed is unwise and counterproductive for the Madhesis themselves.

The Tarai just has one resource base: agriculture, whereas the hills and mountains have diverse cash crops, tourism, hydropower and water. The hills and plains also suffer from soil erosion and flooding, and if these two regions are together they will improve their bargaining position vis-à-vis the downstream Indian states of

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The clamour for identity is a result of the historical marginalisation of Nepal's diverse ethnicities, but in addressing this grievance the proponents of ethnicity-based federalism are proposing to carve up the country into entities that will be economically unsustainable and lay the seeds for long-term inter-ethnic discord.

Nepal's multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic mosaic is overlapped to such an extent that it is impossible to draw boundaries. If boundaries must be carved, they must reflect Nepal's bio-ecological watershed of the four main rivers as the basis of decentralisation.

When the lowest bargaining position seems to be the seven-state model, it may be absurd to push for a four-state model, but that is the only model that will actually satisfy everyone. And such an economic cooperative model is the only one that will be viable.

This proposal encompasses ethnic sentiment as well as our need for economic integration by incorporating diverse resource bases and their

comparative advantages by demarcating Karnali, Gandaki, Koshi, and Bagmati as the capitals of Kathmandu Valley. Three or so ethnic provinces could be formed within each of these states. A complete separation of the Tarai strip from the hills in forming a stand-alone province will have detrimental effects on the people of Tarai in the long run.

It makes very little sense to divide our resource base while the rest of the world is moving towards forming economic communities. The Tarai is already densely populated and has reached the limits of its agricultural and natural resources. In 20 years, with no other resource to harness, this strip of land will likely turn into a spatial poverty trap. A stand-alone hilly region, on the other hand, will struggle with food deficits. Inhabitants of the hills are migrating out in record numbers to the Tarai plains and abroad. In the short run, the hilly regions will continue to suffer. Add to that the claims about river systems and flooding problems, and we are looking at

a protracted water conflict and ethnic disharmony.

An ecologically balanced larger Karnali state, on the other hand, can be a powerhouse in producing protein through animal husbandry, whereas its Tarai section can still be a bread basket. The potential of this hill-plain, considering its combined cash crops (coffee, olives, herbs, spices, and vegetables) is unlimited.

The same argument applies to the other two Tarai provinces (Lumbini sub-province within the larger Gandaki state, and Janakipur or Mithila province in the Koshi state). Dividing the Tarai into three sub-provinces and making each of them a part of the larger state entity is not the end of the world. An economic unit from the mountains down to the plains will be a force to reckon with. A Koshi state will have stronger bargaining power than a strip of Tarai province.


A governance unit comprising the three ecological regions need not be seen as anti-Pahad or anti-Madhes. Collectively, we can all be winners in the long-run, as Oscar the chimp instinctively came to learn. 🐒

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Trailer of Chimpanzee 🎬



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# Jaun hai Pokhara

This spiffy tagline holds true not just for tourists but also to prod the government

**MY TWO PAISA****Paavan Mathema**

It is April-end and Pokhara is bustling with activity. Without a booking, you will be lucky to find a room even in a two-star hotel. The restaurants on Lakeside are busy, and the sky above Sarangkot is dotted with colourful paragliders every morning. Ultralights buzz the Peace Pagoda, and it is rush hour on Jomsom flights. Tourism and businesses are hopeful, exploring new investments.

Pokhara survived the insurgency, political instability and frequent bandas. With politics progressing favourably now, tourism has rebounded and businesses have picked up. Pokhara is cashing in not just as a base camp for trekkers to the Annapurnas and an appendage to Kathmandu, but is inventing new ways of becoming an internationally-recognised adventure destination on its own.

Few years ago, the city used to be closed during off seasons, but now it is a popular stop all year through for trekkers, honeymooners and for refugees from the capital who want a quick getaway. Chinese, Indian and local tourists have filled in the gaps.

In fact, room occupancy by domestic travellers grew by 15 per cent this year, increasing the share of domestic tourism to 40 per cent. Pokhara has also seen a surge in free individual travellers (FITs), who usually spend more and stay longer than group travellers. Yoga and meditation tourism is also growing.

The scenic city is selling not just nature's offerings, but also developing into a health and education hub for the country. Banking and real estate industries have also recovered from the flight of Gurkha families and is taking off, reflecting the optimism in the market.

The picture looks rosy. But ask any businessman in Pokhara and the common complaint is that Kathmandu



SNORUP NHASJU

has done absolutely nothing to support Pokhara's development. The pot-holed highway that welcomes travellers into Pokhara is a testament to the lack of concern showed by the central government towards the city's progress. The roads are bumpy too. There has hardly been any investment in infrastructure to push Pokhara forward. Plans for a new airport are finally taking shape after languishing

for 35 years (see page 5). Problems of water scarcity and loadshedding plague businesses, increasing their overheads by over 50 per cent.

New investors are nervous, as in the case of the paragliding industry which even after 13 years is not governed by specific regulations (see page 6). Although the security situation has improved, tourism entrepreneurs are not confident enough to venture too far from Lakeside. "The municipality doesn't even regularly come to collect garbage," says one hotelier. "It is useless to expect anything else from them. The government exists only to collect taxes."

So the private sector is stepping forward. The "Jaun Hai Pokhara" campaign was successful in boosting domestic tourism. Following its lead, tourism entrepreneurs started "Chaliye Pokhara" campaign in Indian cities this year. Hoteliers now want Lakeside to be open 24 hours.

The central government can play an important role in easing operations for businesses and improving the investment environment. With over 300,000 tourists visiting Pokhara every year and development in other sectors, the city makes a significant contribution to the country's economy. Pokhara has been the poster city for Nepal's tourism for long. It's payback time. 🇳🇵

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TRISHNA RANA

# Finally, a new airport?

RAMESH POUDEL

After decades of slumber, the government seems to be finally moving on the construction of a new international airport in Pokhara. The current airport is woefully inadequate to handle tourism growth, but it cannot be expanded and its north-south runway cannot accommodate larger aircrafts, because of mountains on both sides.

Six Chinese companies have bid for the construction of the airport, and one of them is sure to get the contract since the project will be funded by the Chinese Exim Bank and non-Chinese companies are not eligible. The government extended the bidding deadline by 10 days, and this expired on 27 April.

Pokhara's new international airport has been a slogan for many politicians in elections past. Leaders who fly in from Kathmandu have never tired of promising Pokhara its airport. Pokhara's tourism businessmen had heard enough assurances and started lobbying directly

with embassies in Kathmandu. Land for the airport was acquired 38 years ago to the east of the city, but that is not going to be enough for longer runway and the extra area will cost Rs 4 billion to nationalise at current prices.

When built, Pokhara can have direct connections to regional hubs like New Delhi, Bangkok and Singapore, as well as serve as an alternative airport in case Kathmandu is closed



due to bad weather or poor visibility.

"It's not just Pokhara's tourism potential that justifies the need for a new airport, the whole country needs an alternative international airport and the one in Pokhara can

be built quickest and for the least cost," says former FNCCI chairman, Ananda Raj Mulmi.

In a study in 1989, the Japanese aid agency, JICA had proposed a 2,500 m long and 50 m wide runway, but if Pokhara is to accommodate longer-range planes and be a real alternative to Kathmandu, it needs a runway of at least 3,300 m. The head of Civil Aviation Authority in Pokhara, Pratap Babu Tiwari, says the surrounding terrain means Pokhara will need the latest navigation and guidance systems for approach and departures.

Pokhara is in a race with Bhairawa and Nijgad to be the second international airport for Nepal, but local businessmen say Pokhara would make more sense because of its tourism potential, equidistance to Kathmandu and Lumbini and the relatively short period that construction will take.

CA member from Kaski, Rajkaji Gurung says: "We have now reached a point of no return for Pokhara's new airport. It will be built sooner, rather than later."

## The queen of retreats

The challenge in deciding where to build a new hotel in Pokhara has always been to combine a mountain view with a lakefront location.

Lakeside lodges don't have mountain scenery, while hotels like Shangrila and Fulbari that offer spectacular panoramas are situated a bit far from the lake. Fishtail Lodge is the classic example of a hotel that combines both: reflection of the Annapurnas and Machapuchre on the ripples of Phewa Lake.

Now comes Raniban Retreat, located next to the Peace Pagoda overlooking the city and lake, while offering a sweeping panorama from Dhaulagiri in the west to Himalchuli in the east. It is the ideal getaway for couples on honeymoon, a retreat for writers and artists in search of inspiration, or travellers who want to go where few other tourists go.

Located at nearly 1,500 m altitude, Raniban also offers unparalleled tranquillity more reminiscent of off-the-beaten-track properties like Tiger Mountain. No traffic, no disco music, no street peddlers.

Raniban Retreat was first set up by a British investor and bought up by Nepali owners three years ago who renovated and restructured the place. The upgraded resort welcomed its first guests in December

and business has picked up steadily as news of its charms spread by word of mouth.

Getting to Raniban Retreat is an adventure in itself. From Chore Patan, guests can hire taxis or vans and drive up dusty gravel tracks. From the road, visitors have to climb a lengthy flight of stairs that leads to the resort. A boat ride across Phewa, and a one-half-hour hike up Raniban forest also gets you there.

Raniban also gets brownie points for being an environmentally and socially conscious business with solar power and a biogas plant to turn waste into methane. Caretaker Himlal Baral explains, "We want to be a part of the landscape and not disturb nature."

Surrounding villages benefit from the 10 km water pipeline built by the retreat. Milk and spinach are bought from neighbouring farms and except for managers and chefs, the housekeeping staff, manual labourers and guides who take guests on tours of villages are all locals.

The resort has 12 unique tented camps and four cottages, each furnished with double beds, and private attached bathrooms. But you can't really get away from it all because the hotel has free wifi throughout.

<http://www.raniban.com/>



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# Hanging in the balance



PAAVAN MATHEMA in POKHARA

“Ready? One, two, three, run!” shouts the paragliding pilot, as the wind catches your colourful glider. You run and leap into the air, and glide above the beauty of Pokhara, surrounded by mountains and hills. The pilot directs the glider above the hills, and you soar like the birds beside you, heart pounding, more than 2,000 feet above ground.

Pokhara is now considered one of the top five paragliding destinations in the world, attracting enthusiasts from all over the world, including fresh learners, solo flyers and record makers. Tandem flying, which involves a trained pilot flying a passenger, is gaining popularity not just among tourists but Nepalis as well.

Since the arrival of paragliding in Nepal in 1998, it has become one of the most lucrative tourist activities available in Pokhara. Sixteen paragliding companies operate in the valley, and on a good day, over 100 flights are in the air. Flying is open eight months in a year, rare for most spots in the world. “Pokhara has become a

hotspot for paragliding because of favourable weather,” says Narayan Parajuli of Blue Sky Paragliding. “If there is an emergency situation, you can always land on the lake.”

Because of a lack of government action, the growth of paragliding in the country has stalled. Paragliding companies are grouped with commercial

airlines, defined as air sport companies. Paragliding-specific guidelines or safety regulations have not yet been formulated in Nepal. “In the absence of government regulations, we have formed a Nepal Air Sports Association to self-monitor the quality of our services,” says Rajesh Bomjam of Sunrise Paragliding, who is Nepal’s

first paragliding pilot. “But there is an urgent need for clear government policies in this sector.”

There are over 100 capable Nepali paragliding pilots, but less than a quarter of them are legally flying with foreign licenses. Nepali paragliding companies are forced to employ foreign pilots, and pay higher

## Amphibian mountain flights



The company responsible for putting Pokhara on the international adventure sports map is still awaiting the green light for amphibious ultralight flights.

Avia’s ultralights are popular among domestic and foreign tourists, but amphibious flights have not quite taken off. Avia ran successful test flights on Phewa in 2006 and examined the environmental impacts of landing planes on the lake. In 2011, the club shifted its focus to the more secluded Begnas Lake. But resistance from local fishermen and boating associations stalled hopes of any real progress.

Praveen Gauchan of Avia Club says it is difficult coordinating with a lot of different interest groups. Fishermen and boatmen argue that landing on the lake will disrupt boating routes, increase pollution and kill fish, which Gauchan denies. Besides, he says, the Begnas area could benefit from overnight tourism. Avia says it is ready to pay a lake landing tax that will go to local communities, and local boats will be used to transfer guests.

Gauchan says Avia will persist and introduce the first amphibious ultralight flights in Nepal. He adds, “It will add another adventure to Pokhara, and perfectly combine its two main assets: the lakes and mountains.”

## Coming soon: Zip line

If you’ve already felt the thrill of paragliding, bungee jumped with the Bhote Kosi beneath you, and even lowered yourself by canyoning down a waterfall, then here is one more adventure to add to your list. On the north side of Sarangkot, 15 km from Lakeside, is a newly constructed zip line launch site.

From a distance, a zip line looks similar to a cable car. But unlike cable cars, zip lines use gravity to pull the user forward on an inclined rope. The user is securely strapped on a seat which is attached onto the cable. A magnetic breaking system brings the seat to a halt at the landing.

The zip line has been constructed by HighGround Adventures and is being introduced under the name SkyZip. With a 56 percent incline and a length of 1.8



km, SkyZip offers a 2,000 feet drop from Sarangkot to Hyamja at speeds of over 140 km per hour. SkyZip is the first of its kind in South Asia and also the longest in the world.

“Our equipment was designed and fitted by an American company named Zip-flyer,” says Santosh Shrestha of HighGround Adventures and adds, “they also trained our staff, and the test rides have all been successful.”



Blowing with the wind ...

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remuneration and fees. There is a clear need for an official means of certifying Nepali paragliding pilots. Unless government regulations are made, Nepali paragliding companies hang in the balance—unable to capitalise on the current boon of the sport. “Even after 13 years, nothing has changed,” says Basanta Raj Dawadi of Annapurna Paragliding. “The government has given nothing except the sky to promote this sport in Nepal.”

The continued craze for paragliding among foreigners and locals ensures a future for air sports in Nepal. More gliding spots are soon to be opened in Dharan, Lamjung, Gorkha and Bardia. The probability of other air sports like sky diving, para-trekking and para-motoring, being imported is likely, considering the economic success of paragliding. If only the government’s support could keep pace with the air sport industry, Nepali companies and employees might reap the benefits of this growing trend. 

**nepalitimes.com** 

A video paragliding tour 

Two feet not firmly on the ground, #491



With construction requiring only a few finishing touches, SkyZip expects to begin operations within May. Strap up for a speedy trip down to Hyamja, with a panoramic view of the Annapurna range.

**nepalitimes.com** 

Video trip down the line 



## Fuel for thought

Guests like Pokhara’s Hotel Barahi for its view of the surrounding mountains, but what few of them know is that the hotel’s waste is used in its kitchen and bakery for cooking.

Hotel Barahi’s backyard has been transformed into a biogas plant that converts kitchen and toilet waste into flammable methane gas for energy. Although biogas is popular in rural Nepal, Hotel Barahi has shown that even posh establishments can use this technology.

“The municipality is not regular with collecting

waste here, and we had a huge problem with disposal,” the hotel’s manager, Biplov Poudel, explained. The biogas plant cost only Rs 600,000 to build and includes a waste collection system, an underground digester and pipes to take the gas to the kitchen.

“All the biodegradable waste goes into the plant,” says Goranga Kaur, the hotel’s chef. The waste from the kitchen and the sewage pipes makes its way into an underground tank that can produce enough gas to power a stove for five to eight hours a day providing for hotel guests and 100 staff. Kaur says the hotel’s kitchen has been using the gas now for two and half years.

Khem Bahadur Roka who looks after the biogas plant says it is easy to maintain and operate. “We don’t have to worry about garbage disposal either,” he adds.

Says Poudel: “A biogas plant is the perfect solution to our waste management problem, and we save on our gas bills.”

**nepalitimes.com** 

Tour the hotel's plant site 



## By the water

As the eastern lakefront of Pokhara gets saturated with hotels and restaurants and earns the moniker ‘Thamel by the Lake’, new hotels are springing up on the less crowded northern shore of Phewa.

One such is the Waterfront Resort which is situated amidst rice fields, and has a remote feel to it even though it is only a 15 minute walk from central lakeside. The property belongs to the KGH Group of hotels that is owned by environmentalist, forester and best-selling author of self-improvement books, Karna Sakya. KGH stands for Kathmandu Guest House, the pioneering hotel that Sakya opened in 1977 that transformed Thamel into a tourist hub that it is today.

“You can learn everything if you can learn how to smile,” says Sakya, and smiling seems to come naturally to the staff at the Waterfront.

Every room has a stunning view of the lake, green rice fields and paragliders circling above.

The Waterfront Resort’s eco-friendly waste-treatment system, and use of solar technology reflect Karna Sakya’s commitment to environmental awareness. The hotel is perfectly situated for hiking trips up to Sarangkot, or longer treks in the Annapurna Conservation Area. Bird watching, angling, horse trekking and paragliding are also close at hand.

Clean, comfortable rooms, a delicious breakfast (included in the room price), a swimming pool beside the lake, and an outdoor coffee bar make for a pleasant stay. Despite its modern appearance, the hotel’s design helps the guest experience the lake and Panchase Hills, although the snow mountains are blocked by Sarangkot. Not overly luxurious, the Waterfront would be an ideal spot to recuperate after a long trek in the mountains.

**Madeline Cross**

**nepalitimes.com** 

Karna’s karma, #137

## Fusion living



The optimism of Pokhara’s tourism entrepreneurs is evident in the expansion of 400 hotels and addition of new ones. Temple Tree Resort and Spa is one of the newest in the business. Its distinctive western Himalayan architecture by Siddharth Gopalan with slate roofs, stucco walls and hand-made furniture is an example of clever fusion between Nepali tradition and modern comfort. The hotel attracts the conventional tourists, health and wellness enthusiasts as well as serve as a stopover for trekkers. Basanta Gautam of Temple Trees says they have invested in raising the standards of hospitality in Pokhara. “We have tried to integrate a Nepaliness to the architecture and raise the quality of tourism to international levels,” says Gautam.



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EVENTS

**MOUNTAINS AND FLOWERS OF THE SACRED KHUMBU VALLEY**, water colour paintings by Bhikshuni Jamsung Wangmoo depicting the serene beauty of Khumbu. 27 April to 6 May, 10.30 am to 6pm, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 5522307



**EKPHRASIS**, an art performance showcasing poetry, music, and fashion which will be followed by an art exhibition by Milan Rai. 5 May, 7pm, Trisara, Lajimpat

**Concert at the British School**, join the Choral for some light music and songs including Singing in the Rain and highlights from the Jersey Boys. 5 May, between 3.30 pm and 6pm , free entry, donations go to charity

**The new faces of Tibet, an exhibition of paintings by Andrea Lopez Iglesias.** 11 to 24 May, 5pm (5.30 pm on 11 May), Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited

**Run to restore our heritage**, heritage marathon. 5 May, starts 6.30 am from Durbar Marg, register by 3 May at Nepal Investment Bank branches

MUSIC



**ANOTHER STATE OF MIND**, RVL RADIO presents DJ Rabbit and DJ Finzok to keep the dance floor alive with their music. 4 May, 7pm to 12am

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

DINING

**Public Cave**, while their continental and Italian dishes like pizzas, sizzlers and springrolls are a hit among customers, their main attraction is karaoke. Dihikopatan, Pokhara, 9856032958



**SALT AND PEPPER**, a resto-lounge with a variety of dishes to choose from like Hakka Noodles, Hong Kong Chicken and Honey Chili Potatoes. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Byanjan**, enjoy great food at an affordable price, shrimp cocktails, Grilled Fish and desserts are favourites among guests. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Thik Thak Restaurant**, this restaurant boasts live fish from the lake which means the fish dishes are always fresh and delicious. Lakeside, Pokhara



**MOONDANCE RESTAURANT**, one of the few places in Pokhara that you just can't miss; wash down its superb pizza and Lemon Chicken with a glass of mojito. Pokhara

**Boomerang Restaurant and German Bakery**, offers a large selection of cuisine for those who want to enjoy a full meal, if not one can always buy equally appetising pastries from the bakery. Lakeside, Pokhara, 065-461412, 462978, 463474

**Chili Bar and Restaurant**, from Nepali to European cuisine, this restaurant serves delectable dishes along with a dance floor and happy hour serving some amazing cocktails. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Oxygen Lounge Bar and Restaurant**, one of the most happening places in Pokhara with live band performances, good food and a wide range of drinks to choose from. Lakeside, Pokhara, 9804103258



**CAFFE CONCERTO**, for the best pizzas and ice-cream in town, their Italian dishes and Australian red wine are a must. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Monsoon Bar**, try the monsoon bar for grilled delights and mouth watering pizzas. Lakeside, Pokhara, 9841244704, 9804172540



**LA PIZZERIA**, while the eatery stays true to its name it also has some added charm like Italian coffee, pizza delivery services and a wide selection of wine. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Club Amsterdam**, a place to dance, chill out, play billiards, listen to live bands while enjoying a never ending supply of beverages. Lakeside, Pokhara



**ONCE UPON A TIME RESTAURANT**, watch movies or or enjoy appetising dishes like lasagna bolognaise or a Nepali thali set. Lakeside, Pokhara

**D.B. Momo**, friendly ambience with amazing food at an affordable price; while their momos are popular, their Korean dishes are equally remarkable. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Pokhara Beach Club**, a great place with with superb views of the lake you can relax, enjoy amazing dishes, swim or take a boat ride. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Black and White Café**, a great place to spend a quiet afternoon surfing the net with some bakery items like the Swiss Apple Pie and chocolate crepe with homemade icecream. Lakeside, Pokhara

**Bistro Caroline**, a highly recommended place to eat and relax, their Chocolate mousse and whole fish dishes are a must for foodies. Lakeside, Pokhara



A feast of imagination

MOLLY JO GOREVAN

A woman dressed as a man in gold lame, wearing a powdered wig, stands on top of a box and sings lines of Ovid. Outrageous, fantastical, campy, beautiful: *Scenes from The Metamorphosis* at Studio 7 at Hotel Vajra, brings Ovid's poetry to life in unexpected ways. Zeus wears the expression of a gangster in a gold-rimmed bathrobe. Bacchus explodes onto the stage amid roaring guitars, in skin-tight purple silk pants, grapes dangling from his body. In a dream-like scene, several men are trees, leaves flickering between their fingers, holding up arcs of gauze hung with golden leaves, as the sound of crickets pulses through the theatre. The live keyboard music is spare and airy as the performance space. Veering between beauty and outlandishness, *Scenes from The Metamorphosis* manages to sustain an equilibrium between the tragic material of the stories

and the playfulness of the production.

Sometimes the play goes over the top. While gun-slinging youths didn't seem outrageous, five pool boys dressed in skimpy sailor's outfits, cheeks smeared with blush, bumping and grinding to rap evoked the ambiance of a soft-core porno. Juxtaposed with this sensationalism was Samuna KC's subtle and grave portrayal of Alcyone, a lover waiting for her husband to return from sea. The crushed movements with which KC illustrated her paralysis elevated her Alcyone above the conventional, passive, pining female role, and her disintegration was powerful to watch. Later in the performance she would play an old, pious woman, and a nymph. Chameleon performances were carried out by each member of the small cast. In each role he played, Karma seemed to be a completely different human being—from an uptight King Midas consumed by greed, to a spoiled teenager, to his best performance of the night as the god of spring,

where he proved to be a master of slapstick and physical humour. Bidesh Thapaliya as Morpheus was mesmerising—every muscle in his body was engaged in his cold-blooded role, his haunted eyes flickered across the audience as he flirted with death.

Full of dancing, singing, screaming, and laughter—*Scenes from The Metamorphosis* is overdone, carnivalesque. But it should be—it is a feast of imagination. At times, the momentum flags or falters. The production takes great risks, and when successful, the payoff is huge. The stage and actors are constantly transforming, stitched together by the penetrating narration of Divya Dev Pant. By the end, as candles float in the pool at the foreground of the stage, the audience is left with the buoyancy with which *Metamorphoses* is directed and played. 🇳🇵

Scenes from The Metamorphosis  
Directed by Sabine Lehman  
Set Design by Ludmilla Hungerhuber  
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GETAWAYS

**Raniban Retreat**, situated at the other end of the Phewa lake and nestled inside the Raniban forest and the World Peace Stupa, this retreat has one of the best views of the Annapurna range, Phewa lake and Pokhara. *World Peace Pagoda, Pokhara, 977-61-692136, 9841382053*



**HOTEL LANDMARK**, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye. *00977-061-462908/463096/464897, www.landmarkpokhara.com*

**Fulbari Resort**, enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks and dinners. *Rs 6500 per person for 2 nights and 3 days, Call 4461918, 4462248*



**HOTEL BARAHI**, enjoy a great view of the lake, cultural shows, a big swimming pool to beat the heat this summer or scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery in the hotel premises. *Lakeside, Pokhara, 977-61-460617/463526*



**TEMPLE TREE RESORT AND SPA**, a peaceful place to stay complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna- it also hosts three different restaurants to cater to your needs. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, 977-61-465819*

**Lake View Resort**, with a cultural show every evening and hospitable staff, Lake View promises a pleasant stay. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

**Pokhara Grande**, a swimming pool to escape from the tropic heat, a massage parlour and spa to loosen up and a gymnasium to release stress- Pokhara Grande is a great option to unwind this summer. *Lakeside, Pokhara*



**WATER FRONT RESORT**, Water front has it all whether it be birdwatching, paragliding, horse riding, mountain biking or boating in this eco friendly resort. *Sedi Height, Lakeside, 977-61-466370, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com*



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

It's difficult to pick an eatery when you are in Pokhara's Lakeside, where every second building is advertising its kitchen's fare and happy hours. After browsing through some, we stepped into Byanjan Bar and Grill, a fairly new establishment on the lane.

With Phewa Lake in its backyard, the two-storied Byanjan makes a smart move with an open patio and verandas. The wall-less design allows customers to enjoy their meal with a serene view of the lake. The interiors have been kept simple and fresh, with a comfortable sitting arrangement that goes well with the vacationing mood of most visitors.

Byanjan's menu is similar to most restaurants at Lakeside, with a selection of Thai, Italian and Indian dishes. Although named Byanjan Grill, the menu boasts of limited grilled choices. The waiters were friendly and hospitable, which, mind you, is still not always the



Byanjan Bar and Grill



case in Pokhara for Nepali faces. The orders took average time to arrive. We skipped the starters, but the restaurant offers regular Nepali favourites like Momo, Mutton Sekuwa, Chilly

Chicken and Khaja Set, among others. The Grilled Pork in the starters looked tempting, but we decided to go with Spicy Shredded Pork (Rs 270) instead. The meat was tender and juicy, cooked just right to go with the spicy gravy. Its simple presentation did not quite do justice to the zesty dish. It also demands a side of rice, and we were lucky to have ordered some fried rice (Rs 160) to go with. Byanjan Sizzler's (Rs 375) noisy entry fit its portions and flavour. Grilled chicken, sausage and pork chops, accompanied by vegetables and fries- the sizzler is a hearty meal. The generous portions of succulent meat tasted as good as it looked with thick savoury sauce. A

hint of black pepper added to the flavour of the dish. Absence of the usual noodle or rice side in sizzlers could almost be forgiven in this scrumptious meal. And our fried rice came handy again.

The menu doesn't list desserts, so make sure to ask for the separate dessert menu. The Cheese Cake was average, but it was the Chocolate Mousse Cake (Rs 100 each) which gave our meal the perfect ending. The Apple Pie, we've been told, is also worth a try.

A peek into our neighbour's table told us that the Petite Shrimp Cocktail (Rs 350) - baby prawn served with cocktail sauce, accompanied

with toast - is quite a treat. Also try the Sear Fish Tawa Fry (Rs 220). The tangy coriander achar compliments pan fried fish slices well.

Overall, Byanjan stands out among the countless establishments on Lakeside for its crisp interiors, quite ambiance and of course, the food. Also a good place to take a book and chill with a cold beer. 🇳🇵

**PM**  
**From Barahi chowk, walk along Lakeside. Byanjan is on your left before you reach the next crossing.**



# IN THE LAND OF BLOOD AND HONEY



**MUST SEE**  
**Sophia Pande**

A love story set amidst war, ethnic cleansing, and a country breaking apart, *In the Land of Milk and Honey* is a surprisingly adept and affecting film, made even more surprising by the fact that it is both written and directed by the super-star actor Angelina Jolie. Often writer-directors will gravitate towards pieces that they can star in as well as direct. Clint Eastwood, to name one, has followed this pattern with usually good, sometimes unforgettable, results. Jolie, however, has put away her ego and crafted a fine story that is as far away from her glamorous life as one can imagine.

The film begins just before the start of the Yugoslavia conflict in the early 1990s in what is now a sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ajla (Zana Marjanovic), a Bosnian Muslim, is a painter who is meeting Danijel (Goran Kostic), a Bosnian Serb (and therefore a Christian) police officer on a date when a bomb explodes in the club that they are at. Both are unhurt though many others are killed. The attack is a precursor of the horror and violence to come.

Flash forward to six months later and the terror has started. The Serbian led army is actively hunting down the Muslim population, shooting able bodied men and taking the women to camps where they cook, clean, and are victims to repeated rape. As Ajla is separated from her sister and her infant nephew, she is taken to a camp where Danijel is posted. Shocked and disturbed to see her, Danijel protects her as best he can. Wary and repulsed at first, Ajla slowly begins to trust him, particularly when he confesses that he is a reluctant participant in the war, but that his father, a Bosnian Serb warlord is the major force behind the continuing violence. The two become lovers and an uneasy and disturbing prisoner-captor relationship is borne. When Danijel is transferred away from the camp he tells Ajla how



to escape through a certain bathroom window. Their paths cross again in the next few years of the ongoing conflict, and whether by design or by accident, their next meeting becomes the crux of the story.

There are many disturbing aspects of the film. Some may ask, why tell such a story at all, and that too, a love story set in such circumstances. Jolie, with her debut feature, is valiantly attempting to bring to the world a subject that is clearly close to her heart. A veteran humanitarian, it is clear that she has paid a great deal of attention to the horrors and injustice of war. The only way to make such material watchable is to frame it by something the human mind can grasp, in other words, the familiar structure of a love story. Mankind has done terrible things in the name of religion, and for one or another ethnicity to gain hegemony. People have short memories, especially the international community that wields a measure of power to stop, or at least

intervene in such situations. While not a masterpiece *In the Land of Blood and Honey* is a genuine and skilled attempt at trying to bring these very important issues to the forefront.

Even nations that have experienced horrors such as ethnic conflicts, war crimes, and civil wars have short memories after the fact. Watching Angelina Jolie's film reminds us of the travesties of war, and the struggle to rise above it. It is an important reminder of the truly unspeakable events that can ensue at the advent of ethnic conflict, and when people regard each other as inherently different instead of sharing a common humanity.

This is exactly the kind of film that can and ought to be made in Nepal and is sure to find a deep and lasting resonance with local audience. One only has to read the papers daily to see that we, as a nation, are very much in a post-conflict intellectual struggle to try and integrate our multi-ethnic peoples into a constitution that needs to be fair for all. 🇳🇵

All DVDs reviewed in this column are available at the writer's favourite DVD store:  
**Music and Expression, Thamel, Phone 01 4700092**

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Watch trailer

# Salt shakers



**DHANVANTARI**  
**Buddha Basnyat, MD**

Salt restriction lowers blood pressure. And lowering blood pressure should reduce rates of heart attacks and strokes. Unfortunately there are no clinical trials to convincingly show that just sodium (salt) restriction lowers the risk of myocardial infarctions, strokes and deaths. The latter three are the usual, well-known end points that are examined when figuring out the benefits in cardiovascular illness.

Normal kidneys which play an important part in regulating blood pressure can deal differently with vast increases in sodium intake. If we go to a Nepali wedding and eat plenty of salty dishes with a generous helping of 'achar', individual blood pressure response will be heterogeneous, that is, all over the place. Some people's blood pressure will show no effect, even though they feasted on salty food, but others will show an increase. And guess what, some will even have a lowered blood pressure. These

are acute or short-term changes. Then there are also differences between how normal people react to excessive salt intake versus people with common diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney diseases. As often happens regarding general health recommendations these days, it is hard to find a 'take home' message about salt restriction in all this confusion.

Turning to the internet and googling key words like salt intake, blood pressure, salted potato chips and so forth is one option. But the internet may lead to more mind-boggling, controversial recommendations. Following suggestions from Ayurvedic or Tibetan medicine is perhaps another option, but if you want conclusions from some kind of randomised clinical trials, you can bet Ayurvedic and Tibetan medicine will not deliver on these counts.

Another possible alternative is to look for dietary guidelines by well-established institutions like the World Health Organisation. Keeping in mind race and ethnicity, factors which influence blood pressure, it would be wonderful to have home-grown guidelines from



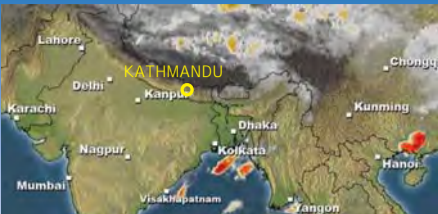
South Asia, but we South Asians are too preoccupied with political problems to give priority to such guidelines.

Western dietary guidelines recommend reducing salt intake to generally less than 2,300 mg per day in normal individuals and to less than 1,500 mg per day for people with high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic renal failure. But if figuring all this out is too complicated, a simple rule of thumb is not adding that extra table salt and cutting down on packaged instant noodles, crispy, salted potatoes, 'achar' and 'titaura'.

More importantly, make sure to check your blood pressure, and if you are on blood pressure medicines, don't stop taking them based just on Ram Dev Baba's pronouncements. 🇳🇵

## WEEKEND WEATHER

Enjoy brisk sunny weather while it lasts. There is a low pressure system headed our way, which will bring wind storms with thunder and lightning across the Himalaya over the weekend. Some early isolated thunderstorms may even start on Friday night. Higher trekking routes at 4,000 m and above will get snow flurries and stormy conditions will develop from afternoon onwards. The Kali Gandaki valley will have gale-force winds after mid-day, which will subside by evening. Domestic flights will be bumpy, so take early morning flights if travelling.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
30-14	30-15	28-14



WALLACE WOON

**MY DAY:** A local dancing to the beats being played at a program in Khula Manch, Kathmandu, on Tuesday to mark May Day.



BIKRAM RAI

**EASY TREK:** A guide leads a tourist on a horse early Thursday morning from Phakding back to Lukla.



WALLACE WOON

**BEAT THE DRUMS:** Locals play traditional drums to celebrate the arrival of the Rato Macchendra Nath chariot in Lagankhel on Friday.



BIKRAM RAI

**LASTING IMPRESSIONS:** A tattoo artist inks a client at the Second International Nepal Tattoo Convention on Saturday in Kathmandu.

# Beware of the future

Us-vs-them ethno-chauvinism is drowning out moderate, sane and rational voices



A debate is raging in the Nepali media between supporters and opponents of ethnicity-based federalism. But instead of being a vibrant discussion on how the country should be restructured, it has turned into an ugly confrontation between those for and against.

One side is not willing to accept anything less than federalism structured along ethnic lines. An otherwise insignificant Janamukti Party stole headlines last week by openly declaring that anti-federalists would be hanged. NEFIN members threatened an armed struggle. On the other side, rigidly orthodox status quoists are needlessly antagonising indigenous groups and minorities by making seethingly paranoid ethno-centric remarks.

This has polarised the debate to such an extent that no Bahun-Chettri can critique the 14-state ethnic federalism model without being blamed for trying to “protect their privileges”. Few Janajatis or Madhesis can speak about social harmony and national unity without being branded a “surrenderist” and a “traitor”. The us-vs-them narrative is now so firmly established that there is no place for moderate, sane and rational voices. Nepal’s ethnic minorities have valid grievances which need to be redressed but fracturing the country into warring ethnic provinces is not the solution. If recent protests by groups demanding and denouncing states are anything to go by, we have opened up a Pandora’s box of regional and communal fanaticism. The Far West has been shut down now for a week by those for and opposed to a unified province. Tharus



SUJIT JHA

have demanded the whole Tarai as their own province and are in no mood to accept Akhanda Sudur Pashchim, and the Madhesis are against the Tharu demand. There is a mirror image of this contestation in eastern Tarai as well.

Four Mithila activists taking part in a peaceful protest in Janakpur were killed in a terrorist attack supposedly carried out by a rival Madhesi group on Monday. Muslims are on a warpath demanding a separate “non-territorial” province for their community, and frankly why shouldn’t they? Every minority group fears that without a state, their rights will not be protected.

The feeble political leadership is swayed by those within their parties who shout the loudest. What the future holds is much worse than a caste confrontation between Bahun-Chettris and Janajatis, Pahadis vs Madhesis. We are now heading towards a full-fledged multi-

**FINAL WORDS:** Theatre actor and Mithila cultural activist, Ranju Jha signing her name on a campaign organised by Mithila State Struggle Committee. She was killed during a bomb blast in Janakpur this Monday along with three others while taking part in a peaceful protest.

ethnic strife. How exactly do the leaders hope to resolve disputes between the overlapping territorial claims of Newa Pradesh and Tamsaling, Limbuwan and Khumbuwan, Tamuwan and Magarat, and balance the demands for one Madhes against one Tharuhat? These are complex issues and the parties are faced with a fait accompli on a three-week deadline. Forming a new government before May 27 was part of a package deal on power. The future of the country is too important to be consigned to give-and-take between short-term politicians.

We have seen from Sri Lanka, Bosnia and former Czechoslovakia how political

accommodation can lead to ethno-separatism and multi-pronged ethnic wars. It is easy to dismiss anyone who talks about a greater national identity as being an elitist, a follower of “Mahendra Path”, or a royalist. But ethnic politics is a dead ideology and has been long discarded. How many lives should be lost before we finally accept that there is an easier way to mainstream marginalised communities and ensure greater representation?

Such extremism is the work of a few loudmouth hotheads and goes against popular sentiment. The Himalmedia Poll last year showed that even among Madhesis and ethnic communities, there is little support for ethnicity-based federalism. This year’s poll, the results of which will be released next week confirm this. The loudest advocates of ethnic states in Nepal are intellectuals of the elite class who suffer from a guilt complex. They want to wash away their shame with the slogan of ethnic federalism but have forgotten to recognise that it is possible for all communities in Nepal to thrive, prosper, celebrate their uniqueness and enjoy equal rights and opportunities without setting up artificial borders. Experts and policy makers would have done the country a great service if they had worked to reinforce this message instead of fanning the flames of ethnic discord.

Last week after completing the Great Himalayan Trail trek across Nepal, Apa Sherpa and his team reaffirmed to journalists what many Nepalis already knew. That despite differences, there is a great deal of acceptance and goodwill among people of different communities. As Saurav Dhakal poignantly noted: “The mountain people are not warm until the plain people make quilts for them.” Any political arrangement that overlooks this heterogeneous harmony and interdependence among Nepalis will lead us to tragedy. ❑

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BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

# Dangerous minds

A few ruthless leaders must not jeopardise democracy just to fulfill their personal ambitions and greed

There was a lot of hope after the war ended in 2006 that the country would finally have a new political landscape to ensure justice, peace and development. With just over a fortnight remaining for the CA deadline, there are good reasons for Nepalis to dread what 28 May holds for them.

This week's deadly blast in Janakpur has sent a shiver of fear across the country, and the deteriorating situation in the Far West threatens to spill over into rest of Nepal. It may sound like an oxymoron, but only rational politics can defuse this time bomb. And we saw just such a stepping back from the brink in the announcement made late on Wednesday of the formation of a unity government.

Historically, individuals have always been more powerful than institutions in Nepal. Ambitious regents orchestrated massacres to get to the throne. Warlords killed rivals to get to power. Autocrats backed by the army unseated democratic governments at will. And in these past weeks, a few ambitious leaders have shown that they can endanger democracy and disrupt social



**BLOODY FOOTPRINTS:** A victim of the Janakpur blast being treated in Teaching Hospital on Tuesday. Monday's blast killed four people and the injured were flown into Kathmandu by Nepal Army's helicopter.

harmony just to fulfill their personal ambitions and greed.

They exist in all four political forces in the country: leaders who put their personal ambition ahead of national interest. For them the negotiations over provisions in the new constitution are all about how their personal or party's prospects in elections will be affected. At a time when we need statesmanship, we have seen politics at its narrow-

minded worst.

Fortunately, we are seeing younger leaders within parties finally asserting themselves, and rising above partisan interests to persuade their leadership to make tough calls. The NC's Gagan Thapa is among the most vocal and puts it bluntly: "This is no time to bake individual cakes. Our priority now must be to complete statute drafting, if possible by participating in this government

or by helping from outside."

There is seething anger within Nepal's oldest party against its ambitious leaders who have a single-minded obsession to get to power. And now that the party has a chance to lead the government soon, we will probably see another re-enactment of the back-stabbing we saw last year. The Maoists are ravaged by a similar power struggle, but they have managed to keep

the Baidya faction limited to occasional fiery speeches, without seriously challenging the leadership. The UML is also torn by internal rifts, and is waffling as usual. How these factions are accommodated in the present government at a time when leaders should be writing the constitution is worrying to say the least. What is even more outrageous is the NC's insistence that it should be allowed to lead a new government before 28 May.

The parties have wasted past weeks unnecessarily fighting over government change. Now, the NC and UML being in government may help bridge the trust deficit, but it will not guarantee anything else. The parties will still have to find a form of governance acceptable to all, and on thorny issues like electoral system and state restructuring they have to remain above narrow partisan interests to fit the demands of Janajatis, Madhesis and Dalits without endangering future stability and social harmony.

Most importantly, the parties must be responsible enough to appreciate the lurking dangers in Nepal's political transition. Monday's bombing was targeted at a larger crowd to create greater mayhem and upset the country's delicately balanced ethnic mingling. The parties must defuse this explosive situation by finishing statute drafting in the next three weeks and ending the protracted transition so that we can close this chapter and move on. 🇳🇵



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Pitambar Sharma in *Nagarik*, 1 May

नागरिक

The parties have failed to take the debate on federalism to the masses and don't seem to be taking matters seriously. The Maoists are clamouring for ethnic states, but have not defined what that means precisely. Just naming states after different ethnic groups is not enough. Will the rights of minorities be protected in such states? Will historically marginalised communities be accorded special privileges in such provinces? Is ethnicity the sole basis of identity? What about other identities? These questions have been left unanswered. The issue of viability has also not been adequately discussed.

Some people say federalism would be more viable if there are more states. But if the idea was

# States of disaster



DANDA GURUNG

to strengthen the centre against provinces, why did we need federalism in the first place? Having fewer states would actually help strengthen centre-state relation.

Under an ethnicity-based federal model, every group is entitled to states. You cannot give a state to Limbus and not give one to Khumbus. Trying to please all ethnic groups might work in the short-term and parties can bolster their vote banks. But long-term development of the country will be severely jeopardised.

Federalism could have been a very good model for Nepal, but the way our leaders are handling the issue, it is bound to be a disaster. Until parties become more honest and accountable, it will not matter what model we adopt. Things are not going to change. After all, the same political culture that will be reflected in our future states.

## Absolute power corrupts

C P Gajurel, UCPN-M leader in *Nagarik*, 29 April

नागरिक

The debate in the UCPN-M has taken a new turn. Earlier, we were supporting Pushpa Kamal Dahal as our presidential candidate, but now this is no longer the case. We have come to realise that absolute power tends to corrupt even the most honest and upright person. Although the presidential system is also a kind of a parliamentary model where people directly vote for their ruler, it puts power solely in the hands of one person which is worrying. We can still look for alternatives and get national and state assemblies to elect an executive.

Parliament, legislature and electoral representation are integral to the modern political system, but not all of them are empowered. Even the Chinese have a national assembly of representatives, but it is not a parliament. Only a genuine representative body which is sovereign and empowered can choose the right presidential or prime ministerial candidate.

People: May Day  
Prachanda: My Dayनागरिक Rajesh KC in *Nagarik*, 1 May

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ Why should I step down? I completed the peace process, I will announce the constitution. Vote me out if you dare. You could serve 22 months in government and I can't? ”

PM Baburam Bhattarai to the NC and UML leaders on Monday's all-party meeting, quoted in *Jana Aastha*.

## Proud to be a status quoist

Debprakash Tripathi in *Ghatana Ra Bichar*, 2-8 May

चटाना बिकार

In today's Nepal, advocates of ethnic division, violence, anarchy and one-party totalitarianism are leftist progressives. But anyone who promotes peace, rule of law, democracy and nationalism is labelled a reactionary status quoist. If this is the case, then we should be proud and honoured to be called reactionary status quoists. If speaking out against ethnic and regional fragmentation, and giving priority to social harmony, national unity and sovereign supremacy makes one a reactionary, then we can conclude that reactionary thought is what we need the most in Nepal at the moment.

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# Give-and-take

Rameshwar Bohra in *Himal*,  
28 April - 13 May

हिमाल

A fast approaching deadline and the Supreme Court's verdict have forced parties into making hasty agreement on major contentious issues through mutual give-and-take. The ongoing exercise is driven more by the need to meet the deadline with a workable document in hand, rather than with the aim of creating a long-term roadmap for new Nepal.

A constitution is not only a consensus based document, but a text that lays the foundation and gives direction to the country. While the leaders have finally realised that it is impossible for any party to draft a statute of its choice, they seem to have overlooked the actual purpose of the statute.

The leaders do not understand that this nation cannot sustain a jumbo parliament with 800 parliamentarians from the centre to state legislatures. Besides, the electoral model with 45

per cent proportional representation means that no single can win by a majority in the next elections. And our immature coalition culture is bound to further destabilise the nation's unstable politics by institutionalising closed door give-and-take politics.

The gentleman's agreement on the form of governance is unfortunate, because parties have agreed to divide executive powers between the president and prime minister in an effort to find a 'win-win' situation. Creating dual power centres will spark off turf war between the two executives. Similarly, by advocating for states based on ethnicity, parties have heightened the expectations of various groups who are now demanding their own provinces.

Analyst Muma Ram Khanal, like many others, predicts a difficult time ahead for the country: "When sentiments are provoked and left unaddressed or unmanaged, it gives rise to mass discontent and violence." Nepal will have to face this reality sooner or later.

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Divided we dye.



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Our not-for-much-longer Prime Minister showed he has his priorities right by laying the foundation stone for a new 100-metre-high Republic Tower in Kirtipur. Cynic and naysayers have poked fun at this new erection, saying it looks like a cross between a minaret and an ICBM. But when the country suffers from a serious lack of self-esteem, we can do with a phallic symbol of territorial integrity and national virility. The tower has other uses such as:

- Serve as a giant lightning rod to protect the whole Valley from thunderbolts
- Fool American spy satellites into thinking Nepal has developed nuclear missiles and convince them to donate more food to us
- Put Nepal on the world map for the world's ugliest leaning tower to bungee jump from
- Serve as a Folly even follier than Bhimsen's Folly
- As the only manmade object in Nepal visible from outer space, serve as a beacon for alien crafts to use as docking station
- To mark where Kathmandu used to be if the Valley ever gets submerged again

# Open Defecation Zone

Kudos to **Keshav Stop-it** for staging a comeback as the Development Commissioner of the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (didn't even know there was such a thing) to carry on where he left off as Mayor in 2000 when he demolished an entire neighbourhood to make the Maitighar Mandala Roundabout. Does his designation of Commissioner mean that he is legally allowed to pocket commissions? Just asking. Stop-it Dai showed he is a man of action and intends to hit the ground running. He said his first order of business was to turn the UN Park into a Dating Spot for Kathmandu's lovelorn and privacy-deprived couples. What a great idea. The romantic aroma wafting up from the Bagmati is sure to make smoochers swoon and faint. Keshav Cha even has a fall-back option: declare Kirtipur a Republic Tower-Cum-Dating-Spot.

On May Day while Comrade Maximus was addressing a trucked-in crowd at Khula Munch to rail against "revisionists and counter-revolutionaries", his nemesis Baidya Kaka was delivering a tirade barely 2 km away at Basantapole also against "revisionists and counter-revolutionaries". Comrade Hitman and Comrade Prime Minister found themselves on the same Buddha Air flight, and there were two welcoming committees of local Baddies on the tarmac when they got to Biratnagar. Elsewhere, **Comrade Top Budder** chartered a chopper at govt expense to go down to Rautahat to inaugurate a footbridge, but found Comrade Mohammad Aftab had beat him to it and already cut the red ribbon, so Top Man decided that as long as he was in the vicinity, he'd hop over to Gaur and declare the place an Open Defecation Zone.

Hijacking aircraft is becoming a habit with Baddie ministers. The other day Lekhnath ("Red Head") Bhatt decided to commandeer a Simrik Air helicopter that was on standby to take a bunch of American-Indian pilgrims to Muktinath. **Comrade Butt** thought he would make a quick airdash to his home village, but that took longer than expected. When the chopper returned to pick up the pilgrims, winds had picked up over the Kali Gandaki and the flight was scrubbed. The Indians did not find that funny at all and pelted the chopper and crew with projectiles until airport security arrived.

Bravo, Ncell for going to town with State Minister for Disinformation and Miscommunication Surita Kumari Sah soliciting a 5 karode ghos. When the **fhit** hit the **san**

Ms Sah took it out on her PA for not being discrete and letting the bribe news leak out to newspapers. The very next day, in a speech to a media conference she said, and I quote: "Professional journalism is necessary to protect press freedom and democracy."

Ex-YCL and ex-PLA are all going to be inducted into a Volunteer Formation (VF) and at its launch on Monday at Khanna Garments, BRB and PKD sat on a sofa with shoes on, while the new force sat barefooted and cross-legged on the floor. Then Awesome did a repeat of the Shaktikhor Video by letting the cat out of the bag: "We terrorised people to vote for us in the CA elections, now we will do the same to get an agreement on directly-elected president." Exact quote.

Good thing we are getting a new government. Quick question: do all those who pre-paid to get plum posts now have to pay new ministers all over again?



## अब तपाईं पनि सिमिल होम्सको घर/अपार्टमेन्ट किन्ने किनाउने हैन ?... किन भने ... किन्ने र किनाउने सबैलाई ...

**\*SWIMMING POOL तथा CLUB HOUSE  
FREE MEMBERSHIP (१ जनालाई)**

**खरिदकर्ता**  
पहिलोलाई - ५ वर्ष सम्म  
दोस्रोलाई - ४ वर्ष सम्म  
तेस्रोलाई - ३ वर्ष सम्म  
चौथोलाई - २ वर्ष सम्म  
५ देखि ५० औं सम्मकालाई - १ वर्ष  
किनाउने (Referral Customer)  
लाई - १ वर्ष सम्म



**\*Security, Cleaning,  
Maintenance of  
Common Space,  
Lift Maintenance/Garden,  
Solid Waste Disposal**  
आदिको मासिक शुल्क  
मूकानीको सम्मन्त नपर्ने ।

सिमिल सुनमा सुगन्ध अफर घर-घरमा अनि अपार्टमेन्टमा पनि ...



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PARKING  
२ मोटरसाईकल  
वा १ गाडी**

**\*Apartment / Zone-II  
Bungalows (घर)**  
खरिद गर्ने पहिलो ५० जनालाई क्रमशः  
७७ ग्राम देखि १० ग्राम सम्म  
सुनको सिक्का उपहार

**घर/अपार्टमेन्ट किन्न  
सिफारीस गर्नु हुने  
(Referral Customer) ग्राहक  
महानुभावहरूलाई १० ग्राम देखि  
२० ग्राम सुनको सिक्का  
उपहार**

**\*Zone - I  
Bungalows (घर)**  
खरिद गर्ने पहिलो ३८ जनालाई क्रमशः  
१०७ ग्राम देखि ३० ग्राम सम्म  
सुनको सिक्का उपहार

**सिमिल होम्स PHASE-IV, धापाखेलको BUNGALOWS र APARTMENT मा निम्न बमोजिमको SCHEME लागू गरेको छ ।**

**सुपर बम्पर अफर**  
APARTMENT खरिदकर्ता  
तथा खरिद गर्ने सिफारीस गर्ने  
(Referral Customer)  
ग्राहक ८८ जना मध्ये १ जनालाई  
रु. ७५, ००,००० (पचहत्तर लाख)  
को CIVIL COLONY - I को  
घर एक



**सुपर बम्पर अफर**  
ZONE - I BUNGALOWS (घर)  
खरिदकर्ता तथा खरिद  
गर्ने सिफारीस गर्ने (Referral Customer)  
ग्राहक ३८ जना मध्ये १ जनालाई  
CIVIL TRADE CENTRE को  
रु. १ करोड ५० लाख धनी  
घरसल कवला



**सुपर बम्पर अफर**  
ZONE - II BUNGALOWS (घर)  
खरिदकर्ता तथा खरिद  
गर्ने सिफारीस गर्ने (Referral Customer)  
ग्राहक २८ जना मध्ये १ जनालाई  
CIVIL TRADE CENTRE को  
रु. ५० लाख धनी  
घरसल कवला



**घर  
(BUNGALOW)  
को मूल्य  
रु. ८५ लाख  
देखि शुरू**

- शर्तहरू लागू हुने छन् ।
- यो योजना निश्चित अवधिको लागि मात्र लागू गरिएको छ ।

**अब, सिमिल होम्स कै घर/अपार्टमेन्ट किन्ने किनाउने हैन...**

..... मौका आउँछ ..... पर्सिदेन .....



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