There are two types of carbon that cause Himalayan snows to melt. One is carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning that heats up the atmosphere through the greenhouse-effect. The other is tiny particles of solid carbon given off by smokestacks and diesel exhausts that are deposited on snow and ice and cause them to melt faster. Both contribute to the accelerated meltdown of the Himalaya. Yak herders below Ama Dablam (right) now cross grassy meadows where there used to be a glacier 40 years ago.

Nepal’s delegation at the Rio+20 Summit in Brazil later this month will be arguing that the country cannot sacrifice economic growth to save the environment. Increasingly, that is looking like an excuse to not address pollution in our own backyard.

**NO WATER? NO POWER? NO PROBLEM**
How to live without electricity and water page 5

**Mother country**
Federalism and governance were not the only contentious issues in the draft constitution that was not passed on 27 May. Provisions on citizenship were even more regressive than in the interim constitution. There is now time to set it right.

**EDITORIAL**
page 2

**OP-ED** by George Varughese and Pema Abraham
page 3
WE HAVE A SITUATION
All of us (ordinary Nepalis, 601 CA members, leaders, civil society) are equally responsible for the mess the country finds itself in today (We have a situation here, Thrus) . People just accepted the lies of the politicians and did not use their power. Civil society also failed to protect the rights of the people. The question is will we yet Dahal, Bhattarai and gang keep lying to us or do we have the courage to say enough is enough and fix what is broken.

Raghn Pandey

WE CANNOT GO ON LIVING WITH DOOM AND GLOOM
We cannot go on living with corruption and dishonesty. We must find alternatives to the failed policies of our political parties. But first we need to stop believing the lies that the leaders keep feeding us. The leaders must have the courage to tell it like it is. People know how incompetent, corrupt and unreliable Nepal’s political class is. Another election is not going to change them.

Rekha Khatiwada

CONVENIENTLY LEFT
Rubena Mahato’s writings used to be good, because she could analyse any situation without the constant concern of who will be affected by her words. It is now evident that her hard work has been for nothing. She must find alternatives to the failed policies of our political parties. But first we need to stop believing the lies that the leaders keep feeding us. The leaders must have the courage to tell it like it is. People know how incompetent, corrupt and unreliable Nepal’s political class is. Another election is not going to change them.

Sanjaya Thapa

MOTHER COUNTRY
Only the Talibani treats women worse

When the Constituent Assembly expired two weeks ago, there was disappointment but also relief at having put off a decision on ethnic-federalism that was sure to leave everyone unhappy. Nepal’s federalism, governance and the proposal of a constitutional court were not the only contentious issues in the draft. There was also the pending problem of citizenship rights which has now been pushed back again.

Ten per cent of Nepal’s population doesn’t have citizenship, and it now looks like they will remain indefinitely stateless. Worse, without the requisite laws in place, the number of Nepalis deemed not to be Nepali will continue to grow.

Nepal’s political leaders wanted a “revolutionary constitution”, and they had no qualms about supporting provisions that would have effectively torn the country apart. They have also been ultra-progressive in terms of co-opting women and making them face double ostracisation. Our citizenship laws have long been primitive, patriarchal and chauvinistic.

We have seen their ineptness too. We have seen their ineptness too. We have seen their ineptness too.

by Dinesh Dixit

I don’t understand why Kanak Mani Dixit says ‘a national unity government made up of a few trusted politicians’ is the need of the moment. But our current leaders are neither trustworthy nor capable and we have seen their ineptness too many times in the past six years. Dahal harbours dreams of becoming the next king of Nepal. Bhattarai has lost all credibility and good will by a unilateral declaration of elections. So where are we going to find these trusted politicians, Mr Dixit?

Sanjaya Thapa

TRUTH WITHOUT JUSTICE
We cannot go on living with corruption and dishonesty. We must find alternatives to the failed policies of our political parties. But first we need to stop believing the lies that the leaders keep feeding us. The leaders must have the courage to tell it like it is. People know how incompetent, corrupt and unreliable Nepal’s political class is. Another election is not going to change them.

Abhinav

DOOM AND GLOOM
By highlighting why pegging the Nepali rupee to the Indian currency is detrimental to our economy, the writer presents only one side of the story (‘Not all doom and gloom’, Phawan Mathema, #007). Nepal has enjoyed plenty of benefits by pegging its currency like cheaper basic commodities (grains, seeds, vegetables, flowers, meat, medicine, agricultural products, automobiles, books, entertainment, oil and gas), travel and transportation fees.

Anonymous

REACH FOR THE STARS
We are reaching for the stars. The stars are a symbol of aspiration. It is the only thing we can do to fight the inequality. We must learn to live with the inequality.

Sanjaya Thapa

HOW TO BOUNCE BACK
The Maoists are being让他们的人们 to fight and die for them. They may have mobilised women to fight and die for them, but it is clear that their notions of gender rights will not be a basis for citizenship, and therefore punishes its non-Nepali fathers from becoming Nepali citizens.

A former woman marrying a Nepali man gets citizenship almost immediately, and their children get citizenship by descent. But the process is endlessly complicated for a foreigner woman marrying a Nepali man. Such a blatantly unfair clause was very nearly pushed back in the constitution.

27 May. Our “progressive” politicians were too busy haggling over state structure and forms of governance to vote.

Far from solving the citizenship crisis, the draft constitution would have created more stateless people: children of parents who can’t prove both parents are Nepali, children whose either parent fails or refuses to get Nepali citizenship, children who cannot identify either of their parents, children whose fathers refuse to sign papers, adopted children. The pain of becoming stateless in one’s own country is not limited to the denial of personal identity. Without a citizenship certificate, people cannot own property, run businesses, travel abroad, get higher education, or take jobs. The state can’t bring itself to accept matrimonial lineage to be a basis for citizenship, and therefore punishes its own people. Our leaders may have been revolutionary, they may have mobilised women to fight and die for their liberation, but it is clear that their notions of gender rights are medieval. Only the Talibani treats women worse.

Politicians and bureaucrats are opposed to equal citizenship rights mainly because of a fear that millions of Bihar women will cross the open border to marry our women en masse and become Nepali citizens. While such things may have happened and citizenship fraud is still rife, the way to control it is by greater vigilance, not by barring millions of genuine Nepalis from being accepted in their own country. Is our nationalism so paranoid, our sense of nationhood so insecure and fickle that we punish our own children?

Given the open border with India and a bureaucracy not known for honesty, Nepal has to be sensitive about citizenship procedures. But what we have seen done without including openly discriminatory provisions in the new constitution, if it is ever written.

Great article Rubeena Mahato.

Great article Rubeena Mahato.
Inclusion without citizenship is impossible

2.1 million. A large number of these did not vote in 2008, and unless the restrictive provisions on citizenship are changed, this number will only increase. Under proposed constitutional provisions, the children of these stateless parents could also be excluded from access to citizenship, and as generations unfold, Nepal will see sharp increases in an undocumented, uneducated population that could lead to significant and costly political and administrative hurdles. The denial of citizenship and participation in political process for a significant portion of the population will severely undermine democracy in Nepal. As Nepal looks to finalise a new constitution, it is critical that its leaders examine the issue of citizenship outside the context of individual interest groups and power centres in its polity. If Nepal’s lawmakers do not lead by example, the xenophobia and xenophobi of their constituencies will lead the country towards a looming crisis and xenophobia of their constituencies will lead the country towards a looming crisis of statelessness and a potential transformation from a patriarchy to a matriarchy. This dangerous conflation of patriarchy with matriarchal, and individual value and independence for an absence of patriarchy) with matriarchy, should be immediately addressed and clarified in order to ensure a fair, well-informed debate and outcomes.

Critical to the citizenship discourse is that it should not be positioned solely as a gender empowering or disempowering debate. Nepal today is a fledgling democracy at a crossroads, and is struggling to achieve a common understanding of the process of nation-building and of a national identity. The added complexity of millions of stateless people can pose serious threats to internal peace, stability, and security. Most countries that have faced ethnic and clan-based conflicts have struggled to redefine nationality laws and citizenship after conflict. The key has been to naturalise those that are born on your soil (jus soli) and/or whose birth giver (mother or father) are citizens of that country (jus sanguinis). The logic being that if you keep them stateless on your soil, you create a community of people without allegiance – political, social, or moral – to your country. For Nepali women, securing legal proof of citizenship can be difficult, especially when a male family member refuses to assist them (for example, if he does not accept that the child is his) or is simply unavailable to do so because he’s away working in another country, like millions of Nepali migrant workers. Statelessness also has a particularly pernicious impact on children, which often impinges on their rights to education, affordable healthcare, and land ownership.

The Election Commission has been clear that the number of people without citizenship papers is higher than...
“Cooperation in earthquake preparedness and eco-tourism”

New Zealand’s ambassador to Nepal, Jan Henderson, spoke to Nepali Times about her country’s relations with Nepal and her visit next week for the opening of a new consulate office in Kathmandu.

Nepali Times: Given the long history of bilateral ties, why has it taken so long for New Zealand to open a consulate in Kathmandu?

Jan Henderson: Indeed. New Zealand has had a consulate in Kathmandu since 1980, reflecting the warm, positive and long-standing relations between New Zealand and Nepal. The event on 12 June is to mark the shift of the New Zealand consulate to its new premises in Kathmandu, which should enable easier access and functionality. I am delighted to participate in the celebration of the move to the new office.

Which areas do you see the most potential to build on cooperation given the goodwill in New Zealand towards Nepal?

The 1953 ascent of Mt Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Mr Tenzing Norgay was a tremendously proud moment in our history. Sir Edmund Hillary was appointed as the New Zealand High Commissioner to Nepal from 1985-1989. The development work of his Himalayan Trust organisation forms an enduring legacy. And 2011 marked the 50th anniversary of Khumjang School which was the first school built by the Himalayan Trust in 1961. I was delighted to visit Nepal last year to participate in the Trust’s anniversary celebrations.

The New Zealand government established the Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship in 2008 to facilitate visits to New Zealand by young leaders from India and Nepal. We also have some valuable education connections: currently we have about a dozen postgraduate students from Nepal studying in New Zealand under the New Zealand Development Scholarship Scheme. There is potential for still closer cooperation, and some of the priority areas we are interested to develop include:

- Earthquake preparedness. Our countries share a vulnerability to earthquakes. This is an area where we could share experiences and expertise around building technology and disaster response.
- Eco-tourism. Our two countries are both welcoming to visitors. We share a strong interest in sustainable and environmentally sound development and in promoting and protecting our great natural scenery. We could explore what more we can do together to learn from each other on making our natural beauty easily accessible for visitors in a eco-friendly way.

Are there any other areas of development in Nepal that the New Zealand government would like to focus more on in the future?

The New Zealand government also supports activities run by New Zealand organisations with their partners in Nepal. Priority is given to sustainable economic development, and disaster risk reduction activities.

What is your assessment of the on-going constitution process in Nepal?

The New Zealand government welcomes the process of reconciliation in Nepal and we encourage continued progress towards agreement on a new constitution.

What are some of New Zealand’s own experiences with Maori rights that you think would be relevant for Nepal?

The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) is New Zealand’s founding document and provides Maori with a particular status as co-partners with the Crown. The Maori name for New Zealand is Aotearoa (meaning ‘the land of the long white cloud’). We are proud of our bicultural heritage in New Zealand. Maori language schools and innovative community-based business initiatives are two important areas of development, but of interest to Nepal. We place a great deal of importance on inclusion: for Maori but also for other ethnic groups. Our parliament overall is increasingly diverse with growing representation by New Zealanders of Maori, Asian and Pacific Island origin.

A leadership program with a difference

I

In January 2008, Lisa Cheoegyal was in Auckland to attend the state funeral of Sir Edmund Hillary with several of her Sherpa friends. It was a grand affair that was televised throughout the world.

There, Cheoegyal met Geoffrey Lorigan, founder and CEO of the Institute of Strategic Leadership (ISL) who offered a scholarship to a Nepali Sherpa leader. Lisa Cheoegyal, who is now the honorary New Zealand consul general in Kathmandu, says: “The feedback from all Nepali participants over the years has been that it was a life changing event, and it is also an example of the unusually strong relationship forged between Nepal and New Zealand, originally inspired by Sir Edmund Hillary’s achievements and work.”

ISL supports participants to build their organisation’s leadership capabilities, encourage development and innovation, and assist with change initiatives. The ISL scholarship includes fees of the one week course, but participants have to find their travel and accommodation expenses. There are now over 1,100 ISL alumni all over the Asia Pacific, including six from Nepal.

Says ISL’s founder Geoff Lorigan: “All Nepali participants have been standouts: intelligent, gracious, wise and it’s been an honour to have their involvement and contribution to the class.”

Last year’s attendee, Gagan Thapa says the ISL training sessions made him think about himself, analyse his motives and re-evaluate personal targets. “I could relate it very well with my own committee in parliament where there are different political parties with different backgrounds.” Thapa told Nepali Times. “I learnt to accept differences, and make them work for an inclusive outcome.”

CA member Sunil Babu Pant agrees, saying the Strategic Leadership Program in Queenstown gave him a chance to reflect, reaffirm his vision and think about how to make his personal goals gel with what his society needed. “It was a way to find out where I want to lead next.”

Dawa Sherpa felt like he was “carrying the burden of the world on his shoulders” and was under constant pressure to solve the problems of his group, Astrek, single-handedly. “What the program helped me realise was that these expectations were mostly self-imposed, unrealistic, and very unhealthy,” Dawa Sherpa told us. “ISL helped me find a clear path from where I stood to where I wanted to be.”

Sanjib Raj Bhandari of Mercantile expected the program to be about leadership, but found out it was more about “self-management” and using those skills in the office environment. He says: “I have been to a lot of leadership programs, but content-wise this was the best.”

www.leadership.ac.nz
Investing in rain

Over-exploited ground water, growing demand and bad management have led to severe water shortage in Kathmandu, which is only bound to get worse. Melamchi is a mirage, so collecting falling rain is the only way out.

The idea is simple: just collect rain that falls on your roof, channel it through to a coarse mesh to filter debris, through a sand bed and store it. Excess water can be channelled to recharge the water table.

Tyler McMahon and his team at Smart Paani have installed 40 rainwater harvesting systems in Kathmandu offices, hotels, schools and households this year alone. “The Valley receives most of its rain from June to September, but most of it is wasted and goes down the drains, what we do is collect for our customer’s daily needs,” explains McMahon.

Despite the system’s potential to revolutionise the way we acquire water, people are deterred by the initial cost as well as unfounded fears about pollution. Raju Dangol, a rainwater harvesting technician, is puzzled by the resistance. He says: “I don’t understand why Nepalis who spend thousands for tanker water are hesitant to invest on a long-lasting and effective system that will save them money. After all it’s not that they have a choice.”

Pretty plastic

We throw away used Wai Wai and Lay’s packets, chocolate wrappers, rice sacks, and tyres. But at Jeevan Kala, people earn their livelihood recycling them into useful products.

Jeevan Kala is a part of Himalayan Health Care (HHC) and collects plastic waste and sends them to artisans in northern Dhading who use them to create beautiful eco-friendly handicrafts. With outlets in Thamel and New York, Jeevan Kala has generated Rs 50 million in the past 11 years selling bowls, waste paper baskets, purses, bags, camera holders and trinkets. The money goes for the upkeep of 18 schools and stipends for 40 orphans and underprivileged children in northern Dhading. HHC also trains health workers and nurses and organises regular health camps.

Explains Sony Parajuli of HHC: “Making money is not our goal, we want to impart income-earning skills so that poor families can become financially independent.”

State of sunshine

Since demand has far outstripped supply, there will be power cuts this time even during the monsoon. It may be the right time to invest in solar panels on your roof for 24-hour electricity for lights and running computers in your homes and offices.

What has deterred most Nepalis is the cost. But the prices of photo-voltaic cells are coming down and there is a way to make solar affordable. Jagannath Shrestha, president of the Nepal Solar Energy Society says: “It’s possible to keep costs at a minimum by using CFL and appliances with low wattage.”

Shrestha practices what he preaches and uses solar cells to run kitchen appliances to reduce his dependence on LPG, kerosene and firewood. Even the rice cooker in his house is powered by two 85 watt solar panels, two batteries of 100 ampere and an inverter.

Shrestha now plans to order low-power refrigerators which can also run on solar.

Shrestha doesn’t see any reason why families that splurge on furniture and decoration should complain about the cost of solar panels. “It’s not a luxury, solar has become a necessity,” he explains, “these systems are very durable and once installed, customers can live hassle-free lives without worrying about load shedding, diesel or inverters.”

Bhrikuti Rai
New Nepali movies struggle to pass the censor board’s obsolete moral standards

SUNIR PANDEY

Picture this scene from the film Loot. The innovative Haku Kale has been working for months on his ingenious plan to rob a bank. On the eve of the big day, when every detail should fall in place, Haku Kale arrives at headquarters to find the band of misfits he carefully recruited and trained, fighting like a bunch of schoolboys. In a fit of rage, intensified by wild camera movements, he spews forth a selection of words that can’t be printed here.

Loot got away without much cuts, but with the censor board becoming stricter, other films might not be as lucky. Before a movie can be released in theatres, producers have to send their reels to the board requesting of film as a mass medium. The need to adopt strict age-based ratings does not fall among any of the draft’s 16 points. Filmmaker Bhusan Dahal says, “Why do censors get to determine social evils? Films are essentially a mode of expression and a reflection of society. I think Nepali society has become more violent. We are also increasingly liberal and open about sex and use swear words on a regular basis. Considering sex a taboo and censoring films is a boarding board advertises an emulsion by depicting a woman’s posterior remains undisturbed for months. This lack of understanding is also echoed in the draft version of the Ministry of Information and Communications’ Media Policy 2012 that was made in sole consultation with JICA, the Japanese aid agency. The draft shows that censorship still remains, and is likely to remain for years, an ideological base in the government’s understanding of film as a mass medium. The need to adopt strict age-based ratings does not fall among any of the draft’s 16 points.

Nepali filmmakers have uncovered a hit formula for creating trailers and designing posters: display as much kissing, sex and skin as possible in less than two minutes or on 81 by 81 inch sheets. Under this formula, story line, central characters and quality are irrelevant. The motto seems to be to sell sleaze and lure audiences to theatres at any cost.

Chapali Heights tried it and now the producers of The Last Kiss: A Unique Love Story have applied the same technique. But a film promising to be a ‘love story’ replete with steamy bedroom scenes is...
for their sexual content seem outdated.” However, there is a downside to this trend of making ‘real and gritty’ cinema. In an attempt to cash in on the supposed popularity of obscenities, the latest Nepali film, *The Last Kiss: A Unique Love Story* is littered with profanities and lurid depictions of sex even after censorship (see below). While comments made on its Youtube page are hardly cerebral, they still show that viewers are not gullible and won’t be impressed by crassness alone.

Such tasteless, loud and vulgar films reveal how little these filmmakers, like their censor board counterparts, understand cinema, or the audience.

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Such tasteless, loud and vulgar films reveal how little these filmmakers, like their censor board counterparts, understand cinema, or the audience.

Kollywood insiders don’t realise that growing access to Hindi, English as well as Korean, Tamil, and European cinema has made movie buffs more sophisticated and they can distinguish between good films and films where script, acting, and editing are mere afterthoughts.

Lack of finances and technical knowhow is not the problem. Our filmmakers are already shooting in foreign locations, building elaborate sets and experimenting with computerised fight sequences. Lack of original story ideas cannot be blamed either. If writers looked in the right places, they would unearth a lot of stories that need to be told in a country that has undergone a decade long war and finds itself in transition. It’s the ‘anything works’ attitude of industry people and disregard of the public that have stalled Kollywood’s progress.

Sex, violence and melodrama might sell tickets, but intelligent and honestly made films wouldn’t hurt the box office either.
EVENTS

ODISSI DANCE, the Indian Cultural Centre presents a dance performance by a highly acclaimed Odissi dance troupe led by Madhavi Mudgal. 8 to 9 June, 5.30 pm onwards, International Swimming Complex, 9849108101

Collision, artist Binod Pradhan presents a series of paintings which depict nature fused into urban landscapes. 8 to 30 June, 5.30 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal

Haiku Hangout, explore unconventional ways of writing haikus while you sip tea and hangout. 8 June, 9am to 3pm, Sarvanam Theatre, Kalikasthan

IN SEARCH OF PEACE, Bhairaj Maharjan depicts various forms of Buddha in his art exhibition. 9 to 30 June, 5.30 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Babar Mahal

POOLSIDE PARTY, cool off this summer by the pool, you can also enjoy magic shows, concerts and b-buying on the side. 9 June, 5pm onwards, International Swimming Complex, 9849108101

NATURE SPEAKS, an art exhibition by renowned artist Ragini Upadhyay Grela about the need to protect nature and the neglect it suffers. 19 May to 18 June, 11am to 7pm (closed on Saturdays), Solace International Designs, Lazimpat

EURO CUP 2012, kick off the Euro Cup with music and drinks to keep you pumped up. 8 June, 7pm to 12am, Cube, Kamaladi

MUSIC

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

Live Music Night, Shahnam and Carnibiz band playing every Wednesday. Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayan Complex

Live music at Jazabella Café, Every Wednesday and Friday 6pm onwards. Jazabella café, Jhamskhel, Patan, call 2114675

NEPSEF IV, NepseFest will be back for all music enthusiasts with Decapitated this September. 8 September, 12.45 pm, Fun Park, Shikali Mandap

Kotetsu, high quality Japanese dishes that cater to your needs and taste buds. Lazimpat

NEW DISH, grab filing meals like pork momos, spring rolls and chop seyu's with excellent value for money. New Road

Boomerang Restaurant & German Bakery, offers a large selection of cuisine for those who want to enjoy a full meal and desserts. Lakeside, Pokhara, 065-461412

Dechenling, the place to head for Bhutanese and Tibetan cuisine, their pleasant and spacious garden is ideal for big gatherings. Thamel

The Heritage, escape the hodgepodge of the tourist hub as you relish delights like paella and panna cotta. Thamel

Caffe U, a homely ambiance with a fusion of Japanese and Filipino delights. Closed on Tuesdays, Sanepa

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

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Poolside Party, cool off this summer by the pool, you can also enjoy magic shows, concerts and b-buying on the side. 9 June, 5pm onwards, International Swimming Complex, 9849108101

VocaBOM, enroll your children in English classes to improve their writing skills, grammar and confidence. For ages five to 15, every Saturday starting from 8 June. 10am to 1pm, Bridgewater International School, Jangal. hopthema@gmail.com, www.vocaboom.com, 9851023188

THIK THAK RESTAURANT, this restaurant allows you to pick the fish of your choice from their well-stocked tanks for a fresh and delicious meal. Lakeside, Pokhara

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Salesperson & Chief Engineer & Manager, B.F. Barley and Jha. A well-experienced job is required in the field of关节. Must be able to work under pressure. Experience in the field of association is required. A good salary package is provided. Interested candidates please send your resume to the email address given below.

For more details, please visit our website at www.nepjob.com.

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Moondance Restaurant

One of the longest standing establishments on the Lakeside restaurant lane in Pokhara, Moondance Restaurant is recommended in several guidebooks, including the Lonely Planet. So it was only fair to them, and us, that we took time to sample their menu during our trip.

Even if you aren’t aware about Moondance’s reputation, its cozy, inviting ambiance is likely to attract you. It’s romantic character is quite appealing to homemakers that flock to Pokhara. Pick your seat in the candle-lit patio, the warm indoors or the veranda upstairs, the romantic character is quite appealing. It’s ambience is likely to attract you. It’s reputation, its cozy, inviting character is quite appealing to both patrons, Nepalis and foreigners, with the same hospitality. Moondance’s owner believes that the customer is the king, and if you aren’t satisfied with your order, they’ll make it again for you, even twice.

The Chicken Enchilada (Rs 290) was the star of our meal. The oven baked tortillas wrapped around tender chicken and soft vegetables sautéed in a spicy sauce, was delicately balanced in flavour and heat. The enchilada was topped with cheese and served with rice and salad, perfect companions to the spiciness of the dish. Also, available in vegetarian variety.

From the Thai kitchen we picked the Chicken Red Thai Curry (Rs 390). The creamy texture of the curry went perfectly with the chicken and vegetables, cooked just right to bring out the flavour. The distinct coconut milk essence was well-balanced with spices and a spoon of the rich curry with rice was just heavenly.

The Crispy Rainbow Trout (Rs 890) seemed tempting, but we were too full to order more. The Indian dishes at Moondance are also quite popular. For dessert, we ask you to try the Lemon Meringue Pie, highly recommended by the patrons as well the Lonely Planet.

Moondance has an air of a place that has been around for a while, and its waiters treat all patrons, Nepalis and foreigners, with the same hospitality. Moondance’s owner believes that the customer is the king, and if you aren’t satisfied with your order, they’ll make it again for you, even twice.
Bright Star

Juno Campion astonished the world with her sublime film The Piano – in 1993, a film that won her the Palme d'Or that year at Cannes, and got her nominated in the ‘Best Director’ category for the Oscars. She was, at that point in time, only the second woman who had been nominated. Campion’s exquisite sensibility is unique and her films are all singularly original. All of them resonate with her hallmark: gorgeous cinematography, and a certain kind of mystery and romance that is hard to pinpoint. Some directors are instinctively able to create an indelible atmosphere within their films - Campion is one of them.

It was only in 2009, with a few films in between and then a bit of a hiatus in filmmaking that Bright Star was released. It was first shown at Cannes that year, and while it was liked, it did not win any awards. This is indeed a shame because the film is one of the best of that year, and as some years are good, and others lamentable, let me qualify by saying that Bright Star is an incredibly fine film for any year.

The film centers on the poignant love story between the romantic poet John Keats and the love of his life Fanny Brawne. As most people know, Keats, now revered as one of the most talented of the Romantic Poets, died at 25, destitute, his talent under-appreciated by critics but worshipped by his friends and fellow poets.

Even as one goes into the film knowing there will be a tragic end, the story is so beautifully filmed, the characters so engaging, and the love story so very tender that it is impossible to be unmoved. The film is often punctuated by Keats’s ravishing poetry - recited in the film by most of the characters without an ounce of pretention, which is astounding given the heavy nature of the poems and their subject matter.

Fanny, played by the often under-rated Abbie Cornish, is wonderful as the witty, independent girl who is not ashamed to defend her own art (she is an extremely talented seamstress and needlewoman) against Keats’s friend and benefactor Mr Brown (played to unductious perfection by Paul Schneider) who is obviously possessive about Keats and fears Fanny might lead him astray (from his poetry).

Ben Whishaw plays Keats with brightness in his eyes and a frailty to his physique that is both captivating and painful to watch. This wonderful cast is rounded off by Kerry Fox as Mrs Brawne, Fanny’s warm-hearted mother; Ede Martin and Thomas Brodie-Sangster complete the Brawne family as Fanny’s adorable little red-haired sister ‘Toots’ and loyal, sensitive, violin-playing brother Samuel.

It is with a wrench that one leaves this little world of Campion’s making where there is tragedy and death, yes, but also beauty and love, where people speak in full sentences and with wit and sincerity. When Mr Brown sends a Valentine card to Fanny to belladonna Keats, he is beside himself when he learns of it. While confronting his friend who continues to disparage Fanny, Keats utters, “There is a holiness to the heart’s affections. Know you nothing of that?”.

In any other film, the audience might have burst out laughing at the line. In Bright Star we rejoice at the sentiment instead.

While confronting his friend who continues to disparage Fanny, Keats utters, “There is a holiness to the heart’s affections. Know you nothing of that?”.

In any other film, the audience might have burst out laughing at the line. In Bright Star we rejoice at the sentiment instead.
SIRAHA -- While the media in Kathmandu can’t get enough of behind-the-scenes intrigue about elections after the demise of the CA, here in dirt poor eastern Terai, people don’t have the luxury of discussing politics. Aurlhi in Siraha was ravaged by a devastating fire last month that rendered 600 families in two VDCs homeless. The prime minister visited the village while 600 families in two VDCs homeless. The reason Aurlhi and Shivanagar did not grab headlines for long could be that there was only one death. The media has moved on and will probably ignore the disease and deaths that will stalk survivors for years.

A fire in Siraha, or an epidemic in Dailekh, do not make it to ‘Breaking News’. To make it to the headlines, the event has to be in or close to the capital, relatively well-off people should be affected, the number of victims should cross a certain threshold. And the prime minister or Miss Nepal should pay a visit, that will always get you a headline.

The national media gave us a blow-by-blow account of the month-long protest in the Far West last month, and the smallest of political demonstrations in Kathmandu are classified as ‘Breaking News’, but it has no time for the personal tragedy of the poorest villages of Nepal’s poorest districts.

“The prime minister’s helicopter flew over us and Miss Nepal probably does not even know the name of our village,” Bishnu Dev Yadav, whose 12-member family is homeless and destitute after the fire, told me. “The prime minister’s of foreign is not just in Nepal, but all over the world. The periphery doesn’t sell, so the periphery don’t come, everybody goes. So journalists have struggled for press freedom, and for people’s right to know, but who really decides what is news, who should get priority in coverage, and what influences these decisions?”

The reason Aurlhi and Shivanagar did not get much media attention because the prime minister visited the village while 600 families in two VDCs homeless. The prime minister visited the village while 600 families in two VDCs homeless. The reason Aurlhi and Shivanagar did not grab headlines for long could be that there was only one death. The media has moved on and will probably ignore the disease and deaths that will stalk survivors for years. A fire in Siraha, or an epidemic in Dailekh, do not make it to ‘Breaking News’. To make it to the headlines, the event has to be in or close to the capital, relatively well-off people should be affected, the number of victims should cross a certain threshold. And the prime minister or Miss Nepal should pay a visit, that will always get you a headline.

By the Way

Anurag Acharya

Up in flames

Life has not been kind to Mohammad Salim, 37, and his family. If the daily struggle for survival in this hard arable part of eastern Terai was not enough, Salim’s family was among 477 households who lost everything in a devastating fire that ravaged the village of Aurlhi on 15 May.

Salim had gone to Qatar two years ago, but got arrested for overstaying and had to be rescued from jail. He was still repaying Rs 200,000 to a recruiter in Kathmandu for a job that did not exist, when the fire hit.

It took 38 hours for fire fighters from Siraha and nearby districts to put out the wind-fanned blaze that reduced six wards of the VDC to ashes. Tube wells exploded like bombs, cattle were burnt alive. I still hear them screaming and cannot sleep," recalls Mehrun Khatun who lost everything, but managed to gather her five children and run for safety.

The Red Cross has been working with the government to distribute food grain, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, utensils and donated clothes. Habitat for Humanity is providing temporary shelter and basic construction material. Habitat’s Rashmi Manandhar said she was working to set up to 50 temporary shelters a day in a race against the monsoon.

COD Dhruva Prasad Dhakal has been trying to get the government in Kathmandu to release the Rs 25.000 compensation for each family that the prime minister promised after his inspection. A relief truck that was sent to the scene of another fire in Shivanagar had to withdraw because a fight broke out among desperate locals. "We don’t have enough for everybody because Shivanagar only gets surplus relief from Aurlhi," said Dhakal who has been asking the prime minister’s office that both villages get compensation.

Besides people, there are cattle that survived but with severe burns. Many livestock have died because of the lack of treatment. Dhakal said a veterinary team had been deployed, but there was no sign of it.

After the fire in Aurlhi, the police and the army were here, and Maoist cadres cooked and fed families for a week. The media was here in force, and even Miss Nepal came with boxes of instant noodles. Now that the rains have come, everybody is gone. There are no cameras anymore, just a handful of relief workers with limited supplies and long lines of people desperate for food.
Rich countries want to abandon promises made 20 years ago to help developing countries protect the global environment

With only a few days to go before the start of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, there are signs that developed countries are attempting to backtrack from the commitments they made at the original Earth Summit of 1992 to assist developing countries to move towards the path of sustainable development. There are also fears that the conference, dubbed Rio+20, may not fully reaffirm the political commitments made 20 years ago. Some progress on the sum-up process made in New York was made during the final preparatory meeting held last week in New York. But only 70 paragraphs out of a total of 329 have been agreed on, leaving negotiators with the daunting task of coming up with an agreed text by the time the political leaders meet on 20-23 June.

Differences are evident in the three new issues being addressed by the Conference: a) the concept of the green economy, b) how to define sustainable development goals (SDGs), and c) what new institutional framework to create to house future activities on sustainable development. But more worrying is the attempt by developed countries to dilute the principles agreed to in Rio 20 years ago, and to backtrack on pledges to assist developing countries.

Thus the North-South divide affects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), and commitments on technology transfer and finance. The CBDR was one of the Rio Principles adopted in 1992. It was agreed that all countries have a common responsibility to protect the environment, but also differentiated responsibilities because the rich countries should shoulder the main part of environmental action due to their greater contribution to the ecological crisis and their greater economic resources.

In recent negotiations, the United States has made it clear it cannot accept references to CBDR. This is a cause of great concern to developing countries, grouped in the G77 and China. For them, the clear reaffirmation of the CBDR principle in particular and the Rio principles in general is politically crucial. Otherwise Rio+20 would be retrograding from the goals of the original Earth Summit.

The US, EU, Canada and Australia do not even want any reference to technology transfer in the title. Wherever the words “technology transfer” appear, there is an attempt to change it to voluntary transfer on mutually agreed terms and conditions. This is backtracking from the previous commitment by developed countries – in the 1992 Rio Summit, the 2002 Johannesburg Summit and others – to transfer technology on concessional and preferential terms, or on fair and most favourable terms.

On the issue of finance, developed countries are resisting the traditional commitment to providing new and additional funds. The draft also urges developed countries to make additional concrete efforts towards the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their GNP to development aid, which had been in the original Rio action plan. But China and the US want to delete this, claiming they never agreed to this target.

The G7 and China proposed that developed countries provide new funds exceeding $30 billion a year from 2013-17 and $100 billion a year from 2018 onwards, and to set up a sustainable development fund. But most developed countries objected to the mention of figures and the fund. Many officials from developed countries were worried their countries are being asked to take on more obligations, without corresponding new commitments to support them.

As negotiations resume in Rio on 13 June, it is hoped that there will be a change of heart by the developed countries on these issues. That is needed to enable rapid progress on other issues to improve the capability of developing countries to protect biodiversity, convert to cleaner energy and ensure sustainable development.

Martin Khor is executive-director of the South Centre, an inter-governmental organisation of developing countries based in Geneva.
Asian Brown Cloud. These ocean in what UNEP calls the permanently over the Indian winds to be suspended China are carried by prevailing industrialisation of India and more warming caused by carbon root causes are most to blame: They are trying to find which of the rapid and undeniable. They retreat, receding snowlines are evidence of freakish weather, the melting of the Himalaya. Increasingly, however, that is looking like an excuse to not address pollution in our own backyard that is contributing to the melting of the Himalaya. Scientists discount anecdotal evidence of freakish weather, but say evidence of glacial retreat, receding snowlines are rapid and undeniable. They are trying to find which of the root causes are most to blame: natural warming after the Little Ice Age 600 years ago, global warming caused by carbon dioxide emissions, and more recently, deposits of black carbon soot on the snows. Pollution from rapid industrialisation of India and China are carried by prevailing winds to be suspended permanently over the Indian Ocean in what UNEP calls the ‘Asian Brown Cloud’. These countries in the region should immediately start working on reducing solid pollutants caused by their increased use of fossil fuels. This would not just slow the melting of Himalayan permafrost, but also save them money from more efficient fuel-burning. While it might take some time to cut emission from industries, simple lifestyle changes like switching to improved cooking stoves in the mountains would also help. “Promoting clean air initiatives would address glacial melting as well as indoor pollution,” says Rajo Lauruli of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre in Kathmandu which promotes clean cooking stoves that reduce firewood use by a third. Back at the Pyramid in Lobuje, Laxman Adhikari helps monitor the instruments measuring black carbon. He has noticed the Khumbu Glacier below him recedes further and further up the valley, and says: “It keeps on melting at this rate, I don’t think my children will know what glaciers are.”

Traditionally brick kilns have been the source of a lot of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. In India, for example, brick kilns are responsible for 5% of the country’s total greenhouse gas emissions. There are cleaner brick kiln technologies available, but the cost and lack of government enforcement in Nepal and India have kept the old stacks belching away smoke. Greentech in India has tried out improved kilns that ensure more complete burning of coal, saving fuel and cutting soot emission. Similar projects have been tried out in Kathmandu, and the BrickClean Network has been encouraging kilns to clean up their act. Baking hollow bricks would also save money. The best alternative may be to do away with kilns altogether and work with Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEB) in which clay is mixed with cement in a 96:4 ratio and compressed with a manual compactor. The resulting bricks are even stronger than kiln-baked bricks, and do not pollute.
Big Three to become Big Six?
Kantipur, 2 June

Unified Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist GANGA BC

Only if something miraculous happens will the Maoists remain one party. Otherwise the party is on course for a split. The miracle needed is for Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to abandon his alignment with Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and join the dissident Mohan Baidya group. The Baidya faction has already declared that it cannot trust Prachanda because he says one thing and does another. While Bhattarai was holding its central committee meeting in Paris Danda last week, the Baidya faction was having its own parallel meeting in Kopundole in which it was going through the process of formally declaring a new party. After the constitution deadline expired on 27 May, matters have come to a head as bad blood between the two factions grew irreparably. Both sides have now nearly given up on trying to save the party's unity, but Prachanda has said he is willing to give it one last chance by stepping down as Chairman if that helps save the party. The Bhattarai-Prachanda faction says it will keep talking to the Baidya group till the last moment and go for an extended politburo meeting on 20 June.

Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist DURGA KHANAL

Ashok Rai is a veteran UML leader and has been minister three times. Currently he is the vice chairman of the party. But he as at the crossroads: whether to stay with the NC or split off with his Janajati and Madhesi colleagues. Rai’s comrade-at-arms, Pritihe Subha Gurung is facing a similar dilemma. Politburo member Gurung has become minister once, and is also on the verge of deciding whether to stay on in the UML, or launch a Janajati party. Former CA member Pasang Sherpa has already left the party. Some Madhesi and Janajati UML members are carrying resignation letters in their pockets and may decide to quit at any time. The indigenous and Madhesi members are dissatisfied with the party’s stance on federalism based on identity, and complained on party tickets for the next election. The NC leaders designated to mediate have themselves been polarised. Arjun Narsing KC says ego, personality clash and mutual mistrust among leaders are the main problems. Youth leader Gagan Thapa says party heads should hand over mediation to his generation. He says: “This is not a big problem, as young leaders can resolve it if they give us the responsibility.”

Nepali Congress KULCHANDRA NEUPANE

The root of the problem within the Congress is the deep-seated rivalry between party president, Surekha Koirala, and Shre Baburam Deuba. The quarrel has paralysed party decision-making and has percolated down to 40 district committees as well. Party leaders aren’t even able to go to their constituencies because the dispute has halted the formation of 32 departments and affiliated organisations including the student union. There is also dispute over the composition of the parliamentary board, the unit that decides that the leadership completely ignored their views. Their conclusion is that senior leaders of the parties are responsible for the failure of the CA. Gurung said that even when his group decided to step back from the demand for a unitary ethnic province and agree to mixed identity, and other parties had agreed, his own party had decided not to go along. UML leaders haven’t given up on trying to save the party, there are hectic behind-the-scenes negotiations going on to save the party. The dissident Janajati members say that if the party leadership responds to their demands, the party can be saved. An extended meeting of cadres is scheduled for later in June.

Questionable silence
Nepal, 3 June

Journalists were widely targeted during the recent banda called by the Janjatis. 87 cases of violence against media personnels were reported during the three day period, whereas in the Far West, 89 attacks were carried out in 15 days. This is probably the biggest attack on the Nepali press after April 2008. Surprisingly, the international community who used to speak out vocally against cases of aggression against the press, has preferred to remain silent. Except for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters San Frontiers, no one has formally condemned the attacks. Chairperson of Freedom Forum Taranath Dahal said, “The donor community would dispatch missions when similar events happened earlier, but they didn’t even issue a press release this time.” So what should we make of this silence when the Nepali press is being openly attacked?

Please return the keys
Nepal, 6 June

It’s been more than a week since the CA and parliament expired, but most CA members have not returned the government vehicles yet. Even after the parliament secretariat sent out letters, only 20 vehicles have been handed back. According to the law, all state vehicles must be returned within one week of the CA’s conclusion. Ram Chandra Pratoud of the NC and chairman of the Madhesi Janadhanik Forum Nepal, Upendra Yadav are among the leaders who are still using government cars. Similarly, heads of various CA committees including Ramesh Rijal, Sushila Kanda, Padmini Bishakarma, Gurung Sukesh, Kubahadur Gurung, Sandhya Dev haven’t handed over their vehicles either. The UML’s Bhim Acharya, and Dalit Janajati party’s Bishwadev Paswan who had been ordered by the Supreme Court to return the vehicles even before the CA’s dissolution are also holding on to government property.

Left turn
Sangh, 4 June

The Maoist party continued its long tradition of neutralising opposing voices through money or force by buying off Nagarkot, one of Nepal’s major dailies. Dahal is believed to have bought 48 per cent of Nagarkot’s shares and has already paid Binodra Gyawali Rs 46.6 million out of the promised 60 million. After Kishor Nepal was appointed the chief-editor, the paper suddenly changed its stance from being pro-democracy to hero-worshiping Dahal and blaming the NC and UML for the CA’s demise. Now that the paper is Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s mouthpiece, it has started boycotting all news related to Mohan Baidya. While journalists at Nagarkot have criticised these moves, the NC and UML leaders are unhappy that all major media houses like Nagarkot and Kantipur are turning leftist. Kantipur Daily’s Sudhir Sharma is a Maoist supporter while Kantipur Television’s Tirtha Koirala, Image’s Mahendra Blata and most other chiefs of television channels are left leaning. Similarly, The Kathmandu Post’s Akhlesh Upadhyay, The Himalayan Times’ Ajay Shahra Khanal, Republica’s Kosmos Bishwokarma, Rajibani’s Rajan Sharma, Nepal Samacharpatra’s Kapil Kaffe are all anti-Congress. Annapurna Post’s Jiwendra Simkhada, on the other hand, supports Ram Raja Prasad Singh’s Nawa Janabadi Morcha. The NC is fearful of losing its influence over the media and is planning a comprehensive media policy to reclaim control.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The terrorists of 26/11 were Pakistanis. The terrorists of 7/11 were Americans. The terrorists of 9/11 were Americans. The terrorists of 25/5 were Indians. The terrorists of 27/5 were Indians. But they didn’t even issue a press release this time. So what should we make of this silence when the Nepali press is being openly attacked?"

Batsayan in Kantipur, 4 June

"They are trying to pit Nepalis against another and turn this country into Afghanistan."

Sushil Koirala quoted in Nepal, 3 June
SUSHILA BUDATHOKI and MINA SHARMA

These are only some of the many heart-wrenching stories of thousands of Nepali women who are sexually abused, physically tortured and even murdered by their Nepali recruiters and employers in the Gulf. Last month, six women were rescued from a building in Kathmandu where an agent had kept them locked up after the husband of one of the victims reported her as missing.

Until 2007, Nepali women were being trafficked in large numbers because going to the Gulf for employment was banned by the government. Puma Chandra Bhattarai, the director general of the Foreign Employment Department, admits that the state lifted the ban and legalized individual contracts for domestic workers after growing pressure from the media and civil society. But sending workers abroad without legal protection and proper verification of employers exposes the women to exploitation and abuse in Nepal itself.

“Making sure that your citizens are safe and well protected should be a priority for any country, but the Nepali government legalized individual contracts, without pulling in necessary safeguards,” says Bal Bahadur Tamang, chairman of Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies. The multi-million dollar migrant labour sector, the largest contributor to the country’s GDP, however, seems more important to the government than its expendable population.

In June last year, the Kuwait government decided to drop immigration charges against all illegal workers, after which 1,300 Nepali domestic workers contacted the Nepal Embassy there, requesting to be rescued. At least 15 women had been taken from them after they were raped by employers.

The risk for Nepali women working in Gulf countries is so serious that only a handful manage to get out alive. According to a UN report, at least 111 Nepali women are trapped in various parts of the Middle East, 88 have committed suicide, and 31 remain unaccounted for. Out of the 2,820 women rescued from these countries, 415 suffer psychological trauma, 86 were raped, and 32 have returned with various injuries.

Unless the government is serious about enforcing the provisions of the Foreign Employment Act and creates a safety net for migrant workers, these statistics and the lives of countless Nepali women will only get worse.

Maids in the Gulf

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(There are an additional 1,311 in Malaysia and 4,000 in Hong Kong)

nepalitimes.com

Even slaves are treated better

“Even slaves are treated better”

I am from Damauli. I do not know how to read or write, so when my sister called from Saudi Arabia and said the job was easy and paid her well, I decided to go. I asked the local agent in my village and with the help of her brother, in India, I went to Saudi Arabia. I was promised $500 per month, but after working for nine months, they only gave me four months salary. They tortured me and wouldn’t give me food for days. Often, the wife would tell her husband to beat me but luckily he did not listen to her. I advise Nepali women not to go to Saudi Arabia. There are no good or bad households in Saudi Arabia, they are all bad.

Lila Panjir was rescued by Paurakhi in February 2012.

They are all bad

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Lila Panjir was rescued by Paurakhi in February 2012.
Kathmandu’s finest are now looking even more stylish with snazzy new eyewear donated by the Govt of Oz. But as breathalysers malfunction and our traffic cops go back to getting drivers to say “Aah”, what Kathmandu’s bravest really need are industrial strength gas masks to protect them from halitosis and multi-drug resistant tubercle bacilli. And with the news that a policeman was beaten up this week by a drunk driver who didn’t like the idea of breathing into the tube, it looks like the traffic police also needs to be equipped with a couple of hand grenades. However, if the international community really wanted to show its concern for Nepal’s long-term welfare, it would give the top leaders of all 36 political parties correctional glasses to compensate for their astigmatism, short-sightedness and myopia.

There used to be a time when people used to smuggle into Nepal commodities that Nepalis needed for their daily household use like VCRs and VAT10s. Then smugglers found out there was a huge demand in India’s license raj. These days, with global trade and China’s rise, Nepal is a frontline state for the transit of contraband in the other direction, items like yarsagumba and tiger pelts. More and more, what is being smuggled through Nepal is not even found in Nepal, like red sandalwood, ivory, pangolins and, most recently, dried sea horses. And therein lies Nepal’s economic salvation: to specialize in being a backdoor transit point for the trade in all commodities that are banned by CITES and other international treaties and for which there is a huge demand in China. iPhones, stealth drones and shark fins.

The last two weeks after the dissolution of the CA hasn’t seen a single bund, chukka jam or hur-tall in Nepal. This has reaffirmed the belief of most Nepalis that having no government at all is much better than having one. In fact, the chances of a government making major boo-boos is so great, the chances of them plundering the exchequer so real, that we are much better off without a government. The constitution was so controversial that the country has been at peace ever since we decided not to have one. The government should ban the government and let the people get on with their lives.

What’s with our political party leaders and their obsessions with resorts? Even when there was an elected Constituent Assembly and Parliament, good facilities, air-conditioned rooms and a canteen at the BICC, they insisted on meeting in Itahian, Gokarna, Radisson or Godavari. The Finance Ministry, which has been keeping track of bills says the four parties spent 4 karads in the past six months winning and dining in resorts. And now that the CA has died, the parties are still inviting the Kathmandu-based diplomats and ministers from foreign countries which there is a huge demand in the other direction, items like yarsagumba and tiger pelts. More and more, what is being smuggled through Nepal is not even found in Nepal, like red sandalwood, ivory, pangolins and, most recently, dried sea horses. And therein lies Nepal’s economic salvation: to specialize in being a backdoor transit point for the trade in all commodities that are banned by CITES and other international treaties and for which there is a huge demand in China. iPhones, stealth drones and shark fins.

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