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YOUNG COMMUNIST: A child carries Maoist flags at a rally on Tuesday in Basantapur to mark the 17th anniversary of the start of the 'People's War'.



FUTURE IMPERFECT

BIKRAM RAI

When the ruling Maoists floated the formula of nominating Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi to head an election government last week, they thought it would finally end the political deadlock.

But the proposal has further deepened the distrust between the Maoists and the other parties, and ignited a controversy within the UML and NC. Older leaders whose bottom line is to see Bhattarai step down conditionally


accept Regmi, but others say merging the executive with the judiciary is fatally flawed.

On Thursday in Biratnagar, Prime Minister Bhattarai let the cat out of the bag when he said: "If the CJ is unacceptable to the parties, then I will head the election government myself."

Analysts like Narayan Wagle say making the CJ the PM was like putting the cart before the horse. "It is more important to first appoint an Election Commissioner and ensure free and fair polls," he

told *Nepali Times*.

Civil society is also divided on the issue, with Maoist-aligned ones going with the CJ proposal, while another group of activists led by Daman Nath Dhungana said in a statement that making the CJ the PM would undermine due process.

Independent observers say the least messy option now maybe the original proposal to convince the UML and NC to join a Bhattarai-led election government.  Sunir Pandey

Lost in transition
Editorial page 2



DOMESTIC AVIATION IN CRISIS

page 12-13



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LOST IN TRANSITION

Nepal's violent conflict ended in 2006 with a lot of loose ends. War fatigue pushed leaders to overlook human rights violations for the sake of peace.

But as Norwegian peace studies expert Johan Galtung reminded an audience in Kathmandu on Wednesday, although the violence stopped seven years ago, the conflict didn't. Unless the unresolved conflicts that led to violence are addressed, the war could reignite. Looking around at images of pain and grief, Galtung said: "All this suffering for what? For nothing."

Somewhere, Nepal's revolution lost its way. The former guerrillas are now so intent on grabbing power they have forgotten what it was all for. The structural injustice in society remains unaddressed. The uproar generated this week by the Maoists' controversial call for an election government led by the Chief Justice has effectively hidden their protection of war criminals.

Nepal, however, is not the only country in the region which has had to deal with a dirty past. Dhaka's Shahbag Square has seen mass demos now for nearly two weeks after Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced Abdul Quader Mollah of the country's third largest party Jamaat-e-Islami, to life-imprisonment on charges of mass murder, rape, and arson during the 1971 Liberation War.

Demonstrators want capital punishment for Mollah, a sign of a nation desperate to come to terms with its brutal past. Shaken from the devastation of a war that killed and displaced millions, and establishing a national identity, meant that prosecution of war atrocities was never a priority for successive governments. For more than four decades, Bangladeshi leaders swept the dirt under the rug and covered it with rhetoric of 'nation building' and 'economic development'. All this has a similar ring to Prime Minister Bhattarai's justification of blanket amnesty in the name of 'protecting the peace process'.

Many local collaborators of the Pakistan Army were



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Nepal is not the only country in the region which has had to deal with a dirty past

re-integrated into mainstream politics, and ended up in positions of power much like the architects of Nepal's civil war who are sitting comfortably in top government, army, and police posts. The parallels between the two countries are disturbing.

When the war tribunal was finally set up in 2010 by the Awami League-led coalition, the scope and effectiveness of what became a largely symbolic prosecution was

restricted. Vital evidence like mass graves, eyewitness accounts, documents from Pakistan, newspaper reports, photographs, and videos are still intact, but many perpetrators have either fled the country or died. The Tribunal can try only a handful of collaborators, and what's worse, thousands who suffered under the anti-liberation forces are no longer alive to see justice being served.

The trials have been made doubly difficult due to Pakistan and India's unwillingness to cooperate. Pakistan has washed its hands of all responsibility and refuses to officially acknowledge the war, and India protected and eventually let go of more than 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war under its control.

Nepal's insurgency was home-grown so we won't have to bargain with international powers, or be at their mercy. The victims, survivors, perpetrators are all Nepalis, and as the Dekendra Thapa case has shown there is still fresh evidence, making it far simpler to provide justice.

In reality, both sides of the Nepal conflict are now in ruling circles and protecting each other. The president has rightly returned the draft of the Disappearance, Truth and Reconciliation Bill which did not address the concerns of victims for justice and truth.

In Bangladesh, there are accusations that the Awami League is using the to take revenge on its rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which has strong ties to Jamaat. With Nepal's badly fractured polity, where parties are willing to go to any length to get an upper hand, there is a similar danger of future governments using post-conflict reconciliation as a tool to punish opponents.

There will be no lasting peace in Nepal unless we address the injustice at the root of conflict, and provide full closure to victims and their families. The good news is that we still have time. However, truth and justice after 40 years will be meaningless.

ON THE WEB www.nepalitimes.com

YEAR ZERO

Now that Kunda Dixit and *Nepali Times* seem to have finally understood the Maoists' farce, what are they going to do ('Year Zero', Editorial, #642)? For starters, how about an apology for misinforming the public and placing their faith in the power-hungry acolytes of outdated and failed political philosophy? Then NT could start doing some real journalism and revealing, with dogged perseverance and unflappable courage, the loot and atrocities the murderers are unleashing on Nepal account-by-account? If the paper can do this much, it will salvage its credentials as a member of the fourth estate to some extent.

Prithavi Raj

- Apologies need to be clear and meaningful, this editorial is neither. And what is worse, Kunda Dixit goes on to say Maoists fooled 'all'. The then King Gyanendra and the Army tried their best to fight the Maoists and warn the people. But they were persistently painted as anti-democratic, dictatorial villains by publications like *NT*, and their genuine message was never allowed to reach Nepalis. Anyone who supported the King's strategy was hounded as 'royalist', 'panche', and other offensive names and forced to shut up. In doing so, the paper created an environment for the Maoists to take over power.

Satya Nepali

- *NT* always bent over backwards to praise the Maoists as the party of

change. The publishers are getting what they asked for.

Rook

Unlike *Nepali Times*, not all of us were fooled. Some of us warned against the dangers of putting a party named after the biggest genocidal maniac in power. Wasn't it obvious? Now things are looking very gloomy for Nepal because there isn't one clean party, or a single politician who can show the way. And election is just a farce because voting will be for the same group of animals.

Flexible1

- An enemy with a pen is much better than a friend with arms. You can challenge the first one, but you can never trust the second one. So I congratulate *NT* for having the courage to apologise for its flawed analysis of the Maoist party, even if it is an indirect one and came quite late. I want to hear a similar apology from the Nepali Congress and UML. They should admit their mistakes and accept it as a part of the learning process.

Gya Rel

- Times change, people make mistakes, the country is desperately searching for change. Good on you *Nepali Times* for having the courage to go out on a limb and give the Maoists the benefit of the doubt.

Pkrugman

- Communists are communists, precisely because they are opposed to democracy. To expect them to be

otherwise is like expecting goats to behave like sheep.

KK Sharma

The Maoists know very well that people in the power-circle of Nepal can be fooled with a few lollipops.

Cardinal point



THE POST-PRACHANDA PATH

Great reporting by Anurag Acharya on a significant breakthrough in the Maoist party ('The post-Prachanda path', #642). I agree that for the first time, there is a glimmer of hope that the path forward will be one paved by Nepalis.

Arun Neupane

- I think the recent change of attitude within the Maoist camp is a step in the right direction. The party has let go of its most committed and most indoctrinated cadre to the Baidya faction and no longer sees the necessity of armed struggle as a way to make its voice heard in politics. Renouncing violence is the first step, however it is more important to have a polity which can accommodate dissent and at the same time move beyond the status-quo.

Binu

- The Maoists would do a huge favour to all Nepalis and the democratic world if they apologised for the suffering they unleashed through decades of violence. Everything else is mere exploitation.

Anonymous

NO RIGHT OF PASSAGE

The lack of sidewalks and other disabled-friendly facilities in the Valley not only make life extremely difficult for the disabled, but parents of young children also suffer ('No right of passage', Sulaiman Daud, #642). While most capitals in the world have sidewalks that a stroller can be pushed along, parents in Kathmandu have to carry their small children everywhere. As a result, an outing for shopping or to a park is far less convenient here than in most other cities. Not only are the daily lives of parents made more difficult by non-existent sidewalks, but the country can forget about hosting any foreign visitors with youngsters. The short-sightedness of the masterminds of the current road widening project, which doesn't include sidewalks, is very disappointing to see.

Thomas

MUST SEE

I wish writers would stop using the term mental asylum ('Silver Linings Playbook', Sophia Pande, #642). The character played by Bradley Cooper in the film has a brain illness called bipolar disorder, something that affects up to 12 million Americans. Mental illness is no different than say heart disease, it's treatable. It's high time we put an end to the stigma against those with mental disorders.

Rook

MIND YOUR LANGUAGES

Thirty or forty years ago, people thought minority languages would die out soon, but they are still spoken even by youngsters ('Mind your Languages', Mark Turin, #641). One threat is that education in Nepal is available only in Nepali language. The more educated a person is, the less her appreciation and use of the mother tongue. Still many of the 'educated' see the need for mother tongue education at least in the lower grades. But there is little or no encouragement from the state. The excuse is that the cost of training teachers and publishing materials is simply too high. We do see, however, that a few language groups have taken the initiative themselves and conduct vigorous programs for adults, -including any young person and children who want to read and write in their own language.

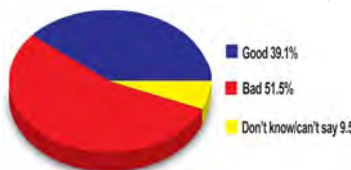
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Weekly Internet Poll #643

Q. What do you think of the current chief justice Khil Raj Regmi as the next prime minister?

Total votes: 1,892



Weekly Internet Poll # 644. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the parties have appointed commissioners at the Election Commission before announcing polls?



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Reconciliation without resolution

Nepal has tried to reconcile with its past without resolving the underlying reasons of the conflict



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Ever since the Maoists launched their ‘people’s war’ in the mid-western hills exactly 17 years ago this week, there has been a lot of analysis of why there was a need for a revolution in the first place.

Some saw it as the Maoist party taking a short-cut to power through armed struggle because they lost elections, while others saw the revolution as a true uprising against centuries of entrenched feudalism. Seven years after the end of war, the contest for the definitive narrative is still going on.

Did 16,000 Nepalis have to die because Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his dogmatic comrades wanted to establish a communist dictatorship, or was it a legitimate struggle to counter the structural violence of the state and establish a more just and equal society?

War cannot be justified even in retrospect of the achievements it claims, but



CINDREY LIU

what tends to get glossed over today is the state’s lack of response to the inequities and injustice that was at the root of Nepal’s conflict. The tales of discrimination against the Dalits, women, Muslims, Madhesis by a monolithic Hindu monarchical state that preceded the conflict have been deliberately air brushed from today’s narratives.

Earlier this week, on the eve of 17th anniversary of the start of the conflict, noted Norwegian peace studies professor Johan Galtung gave a stark warning during

a talk at the Peace Museum in Patan: Nepali society will be in perpetual conflict if Kathmandu’s elite continues to betray people’s aspirations for genuine structural change in society (*pic, above*).

Often in post-revolution phases, the elite is scared of retribution from the bottom rung and resists change, Galtung said. So to ensure a peaceful transition, it is better to lift those at the bottom without disturbing those at the top. This was a generic prescription Galtung has been giving out from South Africa

to South America, and fails to take into account Nepal’s unique political power balance where the progressive middle is squeezed by extremists on both sides of the political spectrum who dominate the discourse.


One of the contested provisions of the peace process is post-conflict truth and reconciliation. The prevalent narrative portrays the conflict as mindless killing with no socio-economic or political rationale. However, the cold blooded murder of Muktinath Adhikari by the Maoists in 2002 and the torture and killing of Maina Sunuwar by the Nepal Army in 2004 were both manifestations and by-products of the same unjust political structure. Those who killed Adhikari were also citizens of this land and their action speaks of the psyche of society as a whole. Similarly, the torture and rape of fellow citizens by soldiers exposed how dehumanised state security forces had become.

“We know punishing those who took away our loved ones will not bring them back, but the least they could do was confess and tell us the truth. It is equally disappointing

that those claiming to speak on our behalf have used our cause for their own ends,” Ram Kumar Bhandari, whose father Tej Bahadur Bhandari was disappeared by the army in Lamjung in 2001, told me after the Galtung talk. Bhandari now leads a network of families whose members were disappeared by both the Maoists and Nepal Army.

In the name of peace, many in Nepal have been trying to work towards reconciliation without resolving the underlying and unaddressed reasons for the conflict. It is now clear that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved last year because traditional forces across political parties, sections of the mainstream media, and the civil society feared changes that would come with a secular and federal Nepal. The longer the excluded are kept at the margins, the potential for conflict will always be there.


History has always privileged the powerful, but it has also given the oppressed the right to protest. Nepal’s political future hangs uncertainly waiting for a resolution between the two. When that happens, reconciliation will take care of itself. 🇳🇵



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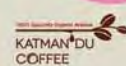
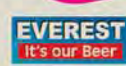
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One are the days of bulky wooden tables and chairs picked from the local carpenter's workshop. Companies today want their office space to reflect their corporate culture, and are willing to splurge on stylish yet comfy furniture and decoration because after all happier workers are more productive workers.

"The demand for practical and low maintenance office furniture is at an all time high," says Hitesh Golchha of Fusion which imports its hardware from the German company Hettich.

As land values soar and space becomes a premium, optimising workstations for maximum efficiency is the primary concern of most business owners. So showrooms across the Valley not just supply material and customised packages, but also have professional designers who guide clients from the start to finish and help them make the most out of what is available.



Most businesses today are housed in rented apartments and it's a waste of their time to hire 15 people who will take a month to set up the place. Efficiency is the key. "Owners would rather pay a little extra to a professional designer who can have the office ready in two weeks," says Jacqueline Silvers of SB furniture which imports easy-to-assemble furniture from Thailand.

Today's workforce spend almost one third of their day in the office. So investing in modern, comfortable, and inviting office spaces will not only keep your employees happy and boost their productivity, but also generate more profit in the long-term. 

Bhrikuti Rai



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HOME IMPROVEMENT

For years, the beauty of Nepali homes was only skin deep. Urban Nepalis would indulge in the exteriors of their houses, but neglect the insides. At the start of the new millennium bright garish colours, flamboyant columns, gaudy chandeliers and drapes became hugely popular and turned into immediate status symbols.

Today's middle-class Nepalis, however, are not only paying greater attention to interiors but demanding simple, smart decor that is durable and easy to maintain. "People no longer want furniture and flooring that their friends or colleagues have. They want something unique, yet minimal and are willing to

pay for it," says Sunaina Shah of Urban Design. "The mantra today is simple is elegant."


Middle-class Nepalis are not only paying greater attention to interiors but demanding simple, smart decor that is durable and easy to maintain

Pressures of modern life mean that many Nepalis don't have much time or energy to take care of their homes. As a result, bulky wooden furniture that take weeks to make and assemble are making

way for easy to assemble and dismantle, light-weight furniture. And despite the higher costs, people are opting for parquet flooring instead of rugs and carpets because they are harder to upkeep.

Improved internet and more money for travel, mean Nepali youngsters have easy access to designs from all over the world at their finger tips. They do their homework and know exactly what they want. High-end furniture like leather sofas, waterproof furniture for outdoors, and walk in closets are particularly popular among this age-group and the premium price tag does not seem to deter them.

As hundreds of boutique furniture outlets mushroom across the Valley, clients are spoiled for choice with local, imported, contemporary, and antique goods. Most showrooms have mock ups, or model structures like the one above to make decision-making easier. If buyers still feel lost, in-house interior designers will work with them to come up with customised plans that suit their budget and space.

With rising purchasing power and more sophisticated tastes, interior decor is no longer about practicality for most middle-class Nepalis. And in their quest for the picture-perfect home, they are eager to splurge on aesthetics and luxury. 

Cindrey Liu and Sulaiman Daud

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Talking furniture



"A generation ago, people would simply visit their local carpenter and bring home whatever was on display or whatever was the cheapest. Today's consumers

have a very clear idea of what they want and come to us with a detailed list."

Devraj Sharma, Karuna Furniture



"Furniture can cost anywhere between Rs 5,000 and Rs 50,000. But middle-class buyers are not fazed by the heavy price tag."

Raju Karmacharya, Life Style Decor

"Minimalistic design and easy to maintain furniture is the rage today."

Nikhil Tuladhar, Index Furniture.



"When clients are spending thousands on interior decor, their biggest concern is to make sure the products last them a lifetime."

Pradesh Shrestha, CP Interior



"Buyers need to do a little bit of homework beforehand so that they can make an informed purchase. Also it's always a good idea to 'work backwards' by choosing things they really want, and then getting the rest with whatever is remaining."

Rajat Sarawagi, Ambience Lifestyle



"Our clients want furniture that can be set up in a few hours with the help of screwdrivers."

Hitesh Golchha, Fusion



"Customers want the best-quality interior products because they feel their house is a reflection of their personality."

Rahul Sarawagi, New Madan Furnishers

"Five years ago very few Nepalis would think about parqueting floors in their homes because it was too expensive. But since those floors are easier to clean and maintain than carpets, everybody wants them today."

Akhil Chapagain, Akhil Trading



"More and more young Nepalis are splurging on the most contemporary and unique products because they want to stand out and make a name for themselves."

Saurav Joshi, Furniture Land



"We counsel our clients from the design phase to delivery and make sure the plan fits their budget and space available."

Pravin Mittal, Emporios

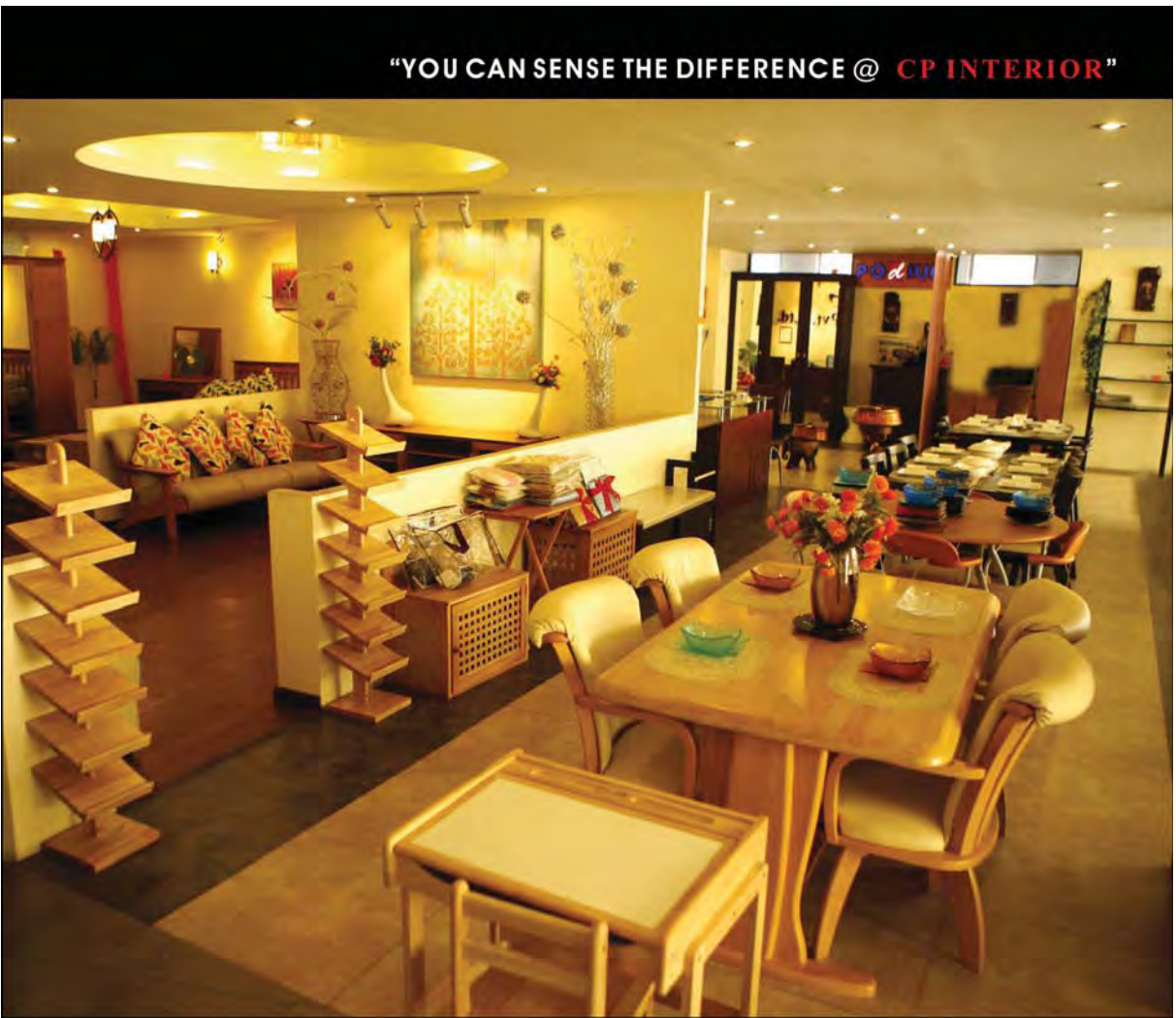


"Home decor is a one-time investment so customers are willing to spend as much as it takes so long as the products are of good quality."

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Jacqueline Silvera, SB Furniture



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EVENTS

MUSTANG: A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY, an exhibition that showcases thangkas, photographs, sand mandalas, installations, and dances from Mustang. 20 February to 13 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

Ultimate photography workshop, attend this intense workshop to get extensive knowledge on creative post production and flash use from maestros Shahnawaz Mohammad and Rajeeb Maharjan; only four seats available. Rs 3,000, 14 to 16 February, 7 to 9.30am, The Image Park, New Road, Kathmandu, register by 10 February, 9841240341/9841497639

Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival, the seventh edition of the annual NIIF will explore issues related to Nepal's minorities. 25 to 28 April, City Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road, (01)4102577, ifa_festivals@yahoo.com, www.ifanepal.org.np

Ultimate video editing workshop, learn the art of editing videos through an extensive eight-day training on the technical and creative aspects of video editing. Rs 4,000, 17 to 24 February, 7 to 9.30am, 9841240341, 9841497639

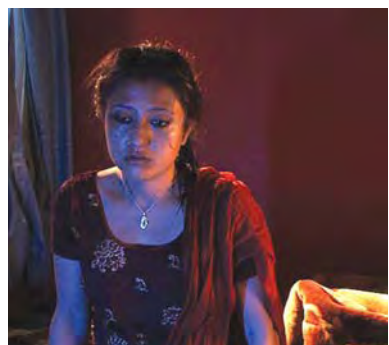
Comic relief, get ready for some great stand-up comedy with JLT, an up and coming group of talented comedians. 16 February, Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, (01)5536919

Secrets of Tibetan weaving, learn how to identify and date Tibetan rugs and textiles from the 15th to 20th century from collector and publisher Rupert Smith. 15 February, 7pm, Indigo Gallery, Naxal

Pranamaya Yoga, an Ashtanga yoga weekend retreat in the hills with Ellen Johannesen. Rs 11,500, 23 to 24 February, Namo Buddha Resort, info@pranamaya-yoga.com

Kabita concert, take part in this get-together of prominent Nepali poets who will recite against the maladies of naya Nepal. 16 February, 2 to 5pm, Bhrikuti Mandap

Eco fair, see a wealth of stalls and activities on what local schools and businesses are doing to promote the protection of the environment. Rs 50, 22 February, 2.30pm, Jhamsikhel, (01)5521794



CHHAPROMA, watch this collection of short films that tells the personal stories of characters struggling to negotiate life and relationships in post-conflict Nepal. Rs 100, 16 February, 2pm, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar

Documentary film-making workshop, explore principles and components of social-issue documentaries with Czech-Canadian film-maker Kristyna Balaban. Rs 2,500, 20 February to 6 March, Sattya Media Arts, Jawalakhel, www.sattya.org/2013/02/socialissuedoc

Cycle rally, students of British School invite you to participate in their rally to raise funds for a charity in Dhading. 23 February, 7.30am, Patan-Basantapur-Jhamsikhel, 9851109546

DINING



YIN YANG RESTAURANT, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. Thamel, 10am to 10pm, (01)4701510

Tamas-laya, promises a refined dining experience, try the prawn tempura, fisherman's fish, and Balinese chicken satay. Naxal, Kathmandu

Saigon Pho, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lajimpat

The Village Cafe, authentic Newari food that comes straight from the heart. Pulchok



NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on its penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. Lajimpat, (01)44432957



ALFRESCO, visit for homemade pastas and other lip-smacking delights. Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Cafe, bide your time in the cafe's free wi-fi zone as you enjoy wood-fired pizzas, home-made pastas, and the Tibetan gyakok. Boudha, (01)4485585

Magic Beans, coffee, cakes, and sandwiches with magical touch and taste. Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, (01)4230914

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

New Dish, grab filling meals like pork momos, spring rolls, and chop sueys with excellent value for money. Khiccha Pokhari

GETAWAYS

Grand Norling Hotel, countryside weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities. Gokarna, (01)4910193

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you get here. Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61)465819

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort, located on a hilltop, the resort offers a magnificent vista of valleys, foothills, and mountains to the north. Dhulikhel, (011) 490114/494, www.dhulikhellodgeresort.com



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न्यू पि. पि. बुक्स: कलकौ, ४२८०६७३, ४२८२४५९ | दीपसेवा कम्प्युनिकेशन: कोटेश्वर, ४६०००७० | सुमिता क्लासिफाईड: नयाँ बानेश्वर, ४९०४२३७ | साई न्यूजिक: बापानाउँ, ४४६९३५५, ४४६३५९२

*शर्तहरू लागूहुनेछन् ।

Dancing alliance

The Nepal Chapter of the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific was set up at a unique event at the Naga Theatre of Hotel Vajra on 9 February. The international network of dancers conducted dance workshops and presentations at the two-day event with Nepali dancers like Rajendra Shrestha, Chhedup Lama, and Krishna Poudel. The workshop was conducted by Bangladeshi dancer, Lubna Marium. Nepali actor Sudam KC collaborated with Canadian dancer Shanny Rann to present a contemporary performance (pic, above).



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SOMEPLACE ELSE

Pizzas are hit and miss in Kathmandu. While Fire and Ice and Roadhouse Cafe are the big boys, Pizza Hut is average at best, and most other restaurants serve the Italian delight as an afterthought. Himalayan Pizza, the newest kid in town, has finally arrived with a mission to transform the Valley's pizzascape. Boasting a delivery service anywhere in or around Thamel, Himalayan enjoys the



PICS: CINDREY LIU

distinction of being run by a genuine Italian manager, as well as having a chef who has plied his trade around the world. The influence shows on the menu, which includes not only traditional Italian favourites, but also an inventive 'fusion' selection with toppings native to the particular region of Nepal that the pizzas are named after. For example, the Annapurna pizza is lined with spicy paneer, boiled egg, and zucchini.

Space is a bit of premium, but you can choose to sit in the outdoor 'garden' or a bigger room connected to it by a small staircase. Being surrounded by high-rise apartments on both sides gives the impression that you're dining at a friend's loft.

There is a buffet of pizzas to choose from -108 to be exact- both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, and the pizzas aren't huge (the small ones are about the size of a large saucer) so you can afford to try a bit more of the menu. The owners tell me they settled on 108 because it is a lucky number in Hindu and Buddhist cultures.

HIMALAYAN PIZZA



We felt like having a real Italian-style meal, which always begins with an antipasto dish. Usually made from cold cuts and fresh

bread, antipasto entrees are intended to prime you for the main, heavier course. We ordered the crostino amalfi (Rs 135. *pic left*), Italian

bread topped with cheese and tomatoes, and served with olive oil. Bite-sized pieces enough for one person, they were the perfect starters before the pizzas arrived.

Being a big fan of cheesy pizzas, we got the small Quattro Formaggi (Rs 225) or four cheeses in Italian. Baked with mozzarella, parmesan, cottage cheese, and feta, it was savoury without being overwhelming. The small Pavarotti (Rs 285) won't make you warble like the famed opera singer, but its mushrooms and smoked ham was a nice contrast to the vegetarian option.

But the menu really shines in its fusion pizzas, for where else but Nepal could you get spicy buffalo meat as a pizza topping? The small Gorkha (Rs 275, *pic centre*), topped with spicy buffalo, chilies, and garlic was fiery and flavourful. There's a pizza for every town in Nepal, so pick your destination and see if it matches up.

With salads, pastas, and fruit pizzas for the kids looking to try something sweet, Himalayan has enough options to keep both adults and children coming back for more. Give it a try next time you're in Thamel. Sulaiman Daud

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Ask around for Hotel Manang in Chaksibari Marg, Thamel. Himalayan Pizza is right next to the hotel.

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ZERO DARK THIRTY



Kathryn Bigelow has created a world of controversy with her most recent film, *Zero Dark Thirty*. Previously the first woman ever to win the Best Director category at the Academy Awards in 2009 for her tremendously intense film *The Hurt Locker*, Bigelow beat her former husband James Cameron that year for *Avatar*, with herself and her film winning over Cameron and his wondrous science fiction epic in both Best Director and Best Picture categories. It is impossible to overstate the kind importance and credibility that this win can give to a director.

With *Zero Dark Thirty*, Bigelow has taken her biggest risk yet. This finely crafted film is about the 10 year long search for Osama bin Laden after the horrific events of 11 September 2001.

Opening with the title: 'based on firsthand accounts of actual events', the film launches into the now infamous torture scenes where a man, Ammar (Reda Kateb), suspected of having links to bin Laden is routinely tortured via either water-boarding or other so called 'enhanced interrogation techniques' (this is the official nomenclature of the CIA for what anyone else would call torture).

Conducting the torture is a CIA officer called Dan (Jason Clarke). As witness is the initially horrified Maya (Jessica Chastain), a young CIA officer who has just been posted to Pakistan, the hub of suspected terrorist activity at the time.

What *Zero Dark Thirty* does as a film is to lay out in cinematic form an intricate procedural method, in other words, it portrays a series of connecting events, people, and information that eventually lead to the Navy Seal assault on a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan resulting in the killing of Osama bin Laden on 2 May, 2011.

There are many troubling aspects to this very fine, very watchable film. Already, the word 'watchable' is problematic when addressing the manhunt for a terrorist that undeniably changed the face of global terrorism. One cannot help but feel a certain disdain at the inevitable relief that most viewers (myself included) experience when the man is finally shot by



a Navy Seal in a finely choreographed set piece where we see the re-created operation through the green night vision goggles of the activated Seals.

There is also, of course, the mixed response from people to the claim that the film accurately portrays firsthand accounts. Bigelow and Mark Boal (the writer) have since admitted that they have taken a certain measure of creative licence in order to craft an engaging film. This, in itself, would have been acceptable had they omitted the opening words which cause people to believe that they are indeed watching a version of reality.

Perhaps what has troubled me the most while watching this film, and also afterwards, is that all the main characters are absurdly good looking (Chastain, Clark, and the luminous Jennifer Ehle all play key CIA officers), and therefore, we, as viewers are already much more sympathetic to them, even during the torture scenes. This is the most classic kind of manipulation of the viewer, a choice that every intelligent director makes knowingly.

The film is amazing, watch it, and think about its impact and related controversies. Meanwhile, I will mull over whether I can forgive Bigelow (a director I greatly admire) for persuading me to root unabashedly for a committed band of CIA agents hell-bent on killing a terrorist. 🇺🇸

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

The heights of war



More than 50 years ago, Chinese and Indian soldiers found themselves locked in lethal combat at 5,000 metres in the disputed Aksai Chin region of Ladakh. If you've watched or read *The Hobbit*, think about the colossal battle in the Misty Mountains, the 1961-62 Sino-India war was fought in a similarly treacherous terrain.

Unfortunately, many Indian soldiers arrived at Aksai Chin from the Indian plains without proper acclimatisation and suffered life-threatening forms of altitude sickness such as high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) and high altitude cerebral edema (HACE). To make things worse, HAPE and HACE were almost unknown to the medical fraternity in the early 60s and as a result, many soldiers were misdiagnosed with pneumonia and treated

with antibiotics. Later on the doctors came to realise the men were not suffering from pneumonia, but water collected in their lungs was making them sick. The medical team intuitively thought the water was due to the heart's inability to pump blood efficiently in the cold and low-oxygen environment.



So they stopped the antibiotics, used digoxin to flog the heart muscles, and prescribed powerful diuretics (like Lasix) for edema. Unfortunately, none of these drugs (antibiotics, digoxin, or diuretics) are useful for HAPE and hundreds of lives were lost in the high mountains.

The Chinese army, on the other hand, was far better

prepared than its Indian counterpart to survive at high altitude. With a long history of fighting in the mountains with Tibetans and others, they are experts in alpine warfare. Unlike Indian soldiers many of whom were flown directly from New Delhi to Ladakh in their summer uniforms, the Chinese wore well-padded clothes to prevent hypothermia, were better rested, and did not exert themselves excessively upon arriving at Aksai Chin, a key component in acclimatisation.

No surprise then that China eventually won the war.

The tragedy in Ladakh, however, led to some of the most comprehensive research and field literature about altitude sickness. The 1965 article on HAPE by Captain Menon in *The New England Journal of Medicine* is a classic work, and the study in the same journal in 1969 by General Inder Singh et al of almost 2,000 soldiers fighting in this hostile terrain is clearly a tour de force.

Despite this wealth of knowledge, lack of awareness about altitude illness continues to plague the subcontinent. Last year, over a hundred Indian pilgrims died due to altitude sickness while visiting Sri Amarnath Temple (4000m) in Jammu and Kashmir. 🇮🇳



SELF DESTRUCT: A Tibetan monk set himself on fire in Boudha on Wednesday morning and died later that evening at Teaching Hospital. The man is said to be the 100th monk and nun to self-immolate in protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet.



LET THERE BE LIGHT: A Tibetan girl lights a candle to celebrate the third day of Tibetan New Year 2013 in Jawalakhel on Wednesday night.



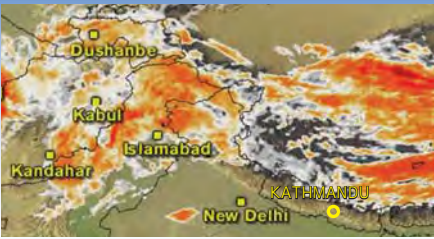
EARLY BIRD: A priest carries a bundle of wood to the cremation ghat at Pashupatinath on Sunday.



SNEAK PEEK: A woman sits behind a traditional Newari balcony in Patan Darbar square.

WEEKEND WEATHER

We are seeing winter winding down now, and a lot of evidence of westerly fronts beginning their spring movement south. The minimum temperatures have been picking up this week, although it has been the maximum that has risen to up to 24 degrees on Wednesday. This trend will continue next week, but only after a cold spell associated with another low pressure system that will bring rain and snow to the mountains over the weekend. Sunday could even see an isolated thunderstorm or two in central Nepal.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
23° 6°	20° 8°	20° 7°

No moral high ground



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

The decision of India's Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government to surreptitiously hang Afzal Guru, the man accused of planning an attack on the Indian parliament in 2001, has undermined New Delhi's moral high ground in dealings with South Asian neighbours.

The execution was intended to blunt an offensive by the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but is going to portray India as hypocritical, richly deserving of the sneers this act is bound to evoke in the neighbourhood.

For a moment, assume Afzal Guru was guilty and ask the question: was it in India's interest to send to the gallows a man whose fate had become a barometer of New Delhi's attitude towards a long-suffering people? The government, quite obviously, knew the answer. Why else would it have clamped curfew on large parts of Kashmir Valley as jail wardens marched Guru to his death?

Not commuting to life

imprisonment, the death penalty will reek of hypocrisy to India's neighbours. This is a government that never tired of lecturing Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on the need to cobble a political settlement with the alienated Tamil population. LTTE cadre were killed in cold blood at the end of the war, triggering accusations of war crimes against the Sri Lankan army.

The Indian government, of which Pranab Mukherjee was a key player and who as president rejected Guru's mercy petition earlier this month, chose to remain silent on Sri Lanka, quite rightly realising it can scarcely be seen to be interceding in favour of a secessionist movement. Secession and terrorism have been India's bane as well, prompting it to counter the twin menace through tactics which are at times in gross violation of human rights.

Yet, to appease its allies from Tamil Nadu, the UPA government mounted pressure on Rajapaksa to devolve power to the North and East of Sri Lanka, once the bastion of the LTTE, for removing the root cause of alienation of the Tamils. The Lankan president did not play along, correctly calculating that he didn't have to compromise at the time he had stymied the separatist tendencies of the Tamil population. This provoked the UPA government into voting



India's execution of Afzal Guru will prompt its neighbours to sneer and call it hypocritical

against Sri Lanka in the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva last year.

Guru's hanging should prompt Rajapaksa to harp on New Delhi's propensity to lecture others on the virtues of reconciliation and political settlement without pursuing these policies in its own dealings with groups alienated from the Indian state.

Kashmir has simmered for much of India's post-Independence history. Over the last two decades particularly terror groups and the Indian security forces have matched each other in barbarity, raining untold misery upon the Valley. However, with support from Pakistan for

terror groups tapering off, and Kashmir experiencing tenuous peace there was hope of New Delhi initiating a genuine reconciliation process.

Not only has New Delhi interpreted the lull in Kashmir as vindication of its policies, India has now roiled the emotions of Kashmiris as well. It is still too early to tell what their reaction to the hanging would be, as they are literally locked up inside their homes because of the curfew. But Chief Minister Omar Abdullah did say: "Generations of Kashmiris will identify with Afzal Guru." His death, so to speak, will become the symbol of the capital's colonial attitude towards Kashmir. Should

there be an outbreak of street-protests, be sure Rajapaksa is bound to snigger at New Delhi's righteousness.

You wonder, too, what the political parties of Nepal have to say on India mounting pressure on them to recognise the aspirations of Madhesis. Opposed to identity-based federalism, the NC and UML have often heard India haranguing them into accepting the idea which they believe is inimical to their country. Perhaps they too would want New Delhi to accommodate the aspirations of Kashmiris or for that matter, some of the people of India's Northeast, before it nudges them to tread what it thinks is the path of sagacity.

Clearly, the Congress and BJP feel Kashmir and its people are subservient to their goal of winning the 2014 general election. Anxious at the outcome of the BJP's likely projection of Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate, the Congress had little compunction in sacrificing a Kashmiri, Afzal Guru, whose hanging the BJP had been demanding for long.

As for the repercussions of the hanging, well, the Kashmiris can always be fired upon and silenced. Their vote against the Congress or BJP doesn't mar the electoral chances of these parties, for the state has just six seats in a House of 543 members. It is from such cynicism and divisiveness that the Indian Republic needs to be rescued. 🇮🇳

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Nepal's domestic airlines are headed into another patch of severe turbulence

SUNIR PANDEY in NEPALGANJ

After a series of boom and bust cycles in the past decade, Nepal's domestic aviation is flying into strong headwinds of low yield, stagnant growth, over-capacity, and safety concerns.

But that is not the conclusion one comes to seeing the hive of activity at Kathmandu airport's domestic apron during the

since January, bringing to 11 the number of airlines that have folded since 2000. Guna has been bought by Simrik Air and Yeti hasn't made up its mind whether to acquire Agni's compatible fleet of Jetstreams and Dorniers.

If Nepal Airlines takes delivery of two Chinese-made MA-60s as expected, private airlines fear it will worsen over-capacity on trunk routes and put further pressure on fares.

The remaining domestic

period, and the US dollar has appreciated 20 per cent.

Domestic trunk routes are heavily subsidised by higher fares that tourists pay on flights to Pokhara and Bhairawa, on the trekker ferry to Lukla or Jomsom, and for Mt Everest sightseeing flights. There has been robust growth in tourism arrivals, with the total in 2012 reaching nearly 600,000, a 10 per cent increase from the previous year.

"We focus on the revenue

airlines cannot afford to buy new aircrafts, and no carrier has planes less than 14-years-old.

There is cut-throat competition between the two biggest players, Buddha and Yeti, which have been waging a negative ad war over the age and reliability of their fleets. With its six ATRs, Buddha has lower operating costs per seat-mile than Yeti's Jetstream 41s.

Rupesh Joshi of Buddha Air admits that there is over-capacity.

three engineers after engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney found maintenance lapses.

Buddha Air's Managing Director, Birendra Basnet, admitted there was a "calculation error, but no malafide intent" regarding engine component replacement, and attributed it to a "malicious smear campaign" by rivals.

"The problem was caused by a computer software interface that had calculated the number of cycles incorrectly," Basnet said, "Pratt & Whitney brought this to our attention and we immediately rectified it."

For its part, Yeti has been trying to get its United Nations safety categorisation changed from 'C' to 'B', and says it is being unfairly penalised for flying to remote area airports,



BIKRAM RAI

early morning rush hour these days. Dorniers and Twin Otters line up for takeoff to Lukla as the trekking season begins, Beechcrafts and Jetstreams are boarding for dozens of daily Mt Everest sightseeing flights, turboprops are boarding for Nepalganj, Biratnagar, Pokhara, Dhangadi, and Bhadrapur.

Beneath this facade of well-being, domestic aviation is in crisis. Two airlines, Guna and Agni, have gone belly-up

airlines seem headed for a shakedown because consolidation is hampered by low profitability. A one-way ticket from Kathmandu to Biratnagar that used to cost Rs 5,000 five years ago is now Rs 3,000. Passengers benefit, but the airlines find it difficult to survive when aviation turbine fuel prices, which make up three-fourths of their operating costs, have gone up by 70 per cent in the same

sectors that give better yield and try to tide over the over-capacity situation," explains Umesh Rai of Yeti Airlines, "passengers may benefit from low fares, but if airlines collapse it will lead to a monopoly in the long-term." Yeti has cut the number of daily Kathmandu-Bhadrapur flights from three to two and Kathmandu-Biratnagar from seven to four. Low fares also mean Nepali domestic

"The airline business is all about day-to-day cash flow," he says, "but with more fuel-efficient and high-volume ATRs, we can offer lower prices than anyone else."

Buddha's safety record, however, was tarnished by the crash of a Beechcraft in September 2011 that killed 19 passengers and crew. It has also been investigated recently by CAAN (Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal) which has suspended

even though it has had no mishaps on trunk routes. Yeti recently passed an audit by the UN's World Food Program for food charters in western Nepal as well as a global tender for logistics support.

Karnali's food charters are a major source of income for Yeti subsidiary, Tara, as well as smaller airlines, Goma Air, Air Kasthamandap, and Makalu Air based here in Nepalganj. But the days of food ferry flights may be numbered as roads reach remote districts like Mugu and Humla. Yeti is also promoting Nepalganj as a hub for transit passengers flying from Kathmandu to destinations in far-western Nepal.

In 2011-12 the total number of domestic airline passengers reached nearly two million, almost 80 per cent of it to and from Kathmandu. Cargo volume broke all records, but 70 per cent of that was between Kathmandu and Lukla, proving how centralised and tourism-dependent domestic aviation is.

"Demand elsewhere is just not high enough, that is why airlines concentrate on Kathmandu," explains CAAN Deputy Director Dinesh Prasad Shrestha. But as remote dirt airfields in Humla, Mugu, Dolpa, Khotang, and Manang are upgraded, Shrestha expects volume to grow. Kathmandu's creaky old domestic terminal is also being expanded to handle more passengers.

Meanwhile, here at Nepalganj passengers for remote Karnali airfields queue for days to buy expensive tickets, and flights are often cancelled due to weather or aircraft shortage. Simikot and Talcha haven't had flights for weeks because of heavy snowfall. ❄️



MSFP
Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme
बहुसरोकारवाला वन कार्यक्रम

Request for Proposal to conduct "Study to identify the opportunities and constraints for private sector involvement and investment in Nepal's forestry sector"

The Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme (MSFP) is an initiative of The Government of Nepal (GoN) funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of The Government of Switzerland, The Government of Finland (GoF), and The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The programme aims to improve livelihoods and resilience of the poor and disadvantaged people in Nepal by maximising the contribution of the country's forestry sector to inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction and tackling climate change.

MSFP envisions that increased private sector engagement will create enterprises, jobs, and markets to take the development goal beyond subsistence to sustained incomes in the forestry sector.

In this context, the MSFP invites experienced, interested and eligible organization(s) to submit their "Proposal" to conduct a detailed study to identify the opportunities and constraints for private sector involvement and investment in Nepal's forestry sector.

Documents with details for submitting a "Proposal" for the assignment can be downloaded from www.msfp.org.np or obtained from ssu@msfp.org.np on request, or collected from the office of MSFP Services Support Unit, Jawalakhel, Kathmandu.

Potential applicants shall submit a complete proposal with all necessary documentation in a sealed envelope clearly marked as **"For MSFP Private sector study"** to the following address by **5.00 pm, 5th March 2013**.

Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme
Services Support Unit
Jawalakhel
GPO Box 12095, Kathmandu, Nepal

Failure to submit in compliance with above specifications will lead to automatic disqualification of the submission. MSFP reserves the right to revise or cancel the RfP and associated processes without giving any reasons whatsoever.



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On a wing and prayer, #105
A safer sky, #625
Trans Karnali blues, East-West blog



Keep the flag flying

Let's rescue the people's airline from the clutches of politicians and under-motivated staff



There seems to be a perception that the woes of Nepal's national carrier, Nepal Airlines, can be resolved solely by adding new aircrafts.

It is true that the airline has antiquated equipment, but the real problem is chronic political interference in management, as well as the activities of its overly-politicised unions.

Lately, there has been a lot of speculation in the press about the survivability of the national carrier, and the behind-the-scenes efforts to bring in new equipment and management. Selective leaks to the media speak of huge cash infusion needed for the purchase of new aircrafts to operate domestic and international routes, as well as keeping its ageing fleet airworthy.

Rivals seem to want to sabotage the airline that flies Nepal's flag, but for Nepal and Nepali people it would be disastrous. Nepal Airlines could and should be the carrier that provides affordable and reliable air travel to remote areas of the country where private airlines are reluctant to operate.

Nepal has nearly four million people working abroad, but most of them spend hard-earned cash buying tickets of foreign airlines to and from Qatar, Malaysia, Dubai or Korea. Other labour-exporting countries like Sri Lanka and the Philippines concentrate on their own national traffic so the money stays at home. With Nepal, it is just the opposite.

None of this is surprising, Nepal's national airline is just as mismanaged, misdirected, visionless, unprofessional, and dysfunctional as the government that controls it. Successive governments since the 1990s have destroyed the airline from the inside and the slide continued after the word 'Royal' was dropped from its name in 2006.

Nepal Airlines like any other modern transportation company needs to be independent and kept away from the clutches of government and political parties. It is also paralysed by rival unions which are ostensibly there to safeguard the welfare of staff, but represent their controlling arm. This interference has to stop to save the airline.

When one faction in politics finally decided to go into much-needed fleet augmentation two years ago, rivals mobilised the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) or the CIAA to sabotage the deal. When the political tables turned, the rivals returned the favour.

How can an airline that is supposed to compete and fulfil requirements to match 21st century aviation be run by the kind of people who work at the NAC head office at New Road? One step into the building and visitors are reminded of a shabby government office with staff gossiping and lazing about with seemingly nothing to do. The rot has now seeped down to every level of staff, with no culture of reward for good performance and punishment for bad.

Executive Chairman Sugat Ratna Kansakar was given a clean chit by the Supreme Court over suspicions of hanky-panky in the Airbus deal. The CIAA and PAC sabotaged the purchase of the 320 and 330 jets three years ago, probably because they wanted a piece of the pie. If those planes had been delivered, Nepal Airlines would now have been ferrying Nepali workers to Doha, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, and servicing multiple destinations in India.

Now, there is a similar attempt to block the acquisition of five aircrafts from China to augment domestic operations: two turboprop MA-60s and three short-takeoff and landing Y-12s.

The carrier lost more time and money, the employees suffered, and so did the country. Nepal Airlines today doesn't even fly to the capital of neighbouring India. When it did, it had kept fares low, and today fares have risen even on budget carriers because of cartelling. It has unfeasible once-a-week flights to remote districts.

Why can't Nepal Airlines sue the CIAA for its mistake and the colossal losses it has caused the airline and country? Where else can the honest employees go for justice?

Just like some Nepalis like to bad mouth their own country, they also like to be cynical about Nepal Airlines. We forget that every time we make fun of our national carrier we are actually ridiculing ourselves, we are highlighting our own failures.

It is time again to let our flag fly high and rescue the people's airline from the clutches of politicians and under-motivated staff. 🇳🇵

Captain Vijay Lama has been flying with Nepal Airlines for the past 25 years.

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'Grounded too long', #545

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United beginnings

Sashank Lama, *Nepal Plus*



Every year on 1 January, billions of people from America to Australia pop champagne bottles to welcome the New Year. A month later in February, the Chinese spread in different corners of the globe celebrate the beginning of their lunar year. However, Buddhist Nepalis who have adopted the same lunar calendar, celebrate separately on different days as part of disparate ethnic communities.

If citizens from so many countries across the world can come together on one single day despite their differences, why can't we Tamangs, Gurungs, Hyolmos, Sherpas do the same? Our religion, customs, way of life, and mindsets unite us, so why don't we toast to our common heritage? We talk a lot about 'unity in diversity', but it's a pity we don't practice what we preach.



Some will argue that we all have different cultures and traditions and need to preserve our uniqueness. But the Chinese too are vastly different. They speak two languages and hundreds of dialects and every few kilometres one notices a change in culture. And yet all Chinese get together for the festivities. On the other hand, locals of Solukhumbu and Helambu who are both ethnic Sherpas and share similar traditions celebrate Losar on different days.

Advocates of different Losars say that myths and stories dictate when a particular community's New Year's day falls on. However, these claims are baseless. In fact, all communities who follow the lunar calendar should celebrate on the same day as China because this is historically and scientifically accurate. Many will vehemently oppose this proposal and claim that our identities will be compromised and sidelined by Chinese cultures. But consider this: we are not bowing down to China, but respecting an ancient civilisation that took thousands of years to be what it is today. Besides no one will become a Chinese overnight just by having the same date for New Year's.

To move with the times even India, which is where the Bikram Sambat calendar originated, despite its diversity has opted to follow Gregorian dates. The Indians have not turned into Englishmen overnight, and neither will we wake up as Chinese.

In a globalised world, we cannot afford to isolate ourselves. I sincerely hope that next year, all Buddhist sisters and brothers from Beijing to Beshisahaar, New York to Nuwakot, Tokyo to Tansen, Seoul to Solukhumbu can keep aside their differences and unite in a genuine show of kinship. And here is my resolution for the year of the snake: let the next Losar be a Losar of unity.

“We are firmly against appointing the CJ as the executive head”

Interview with NC leader Gagan Thapa, *BBC Nepali Service*, 13 February



BBC Nepali: What was the focus of the NC's central committee meeting today?

Gagan Thapa: Some of our senior party leaders including Sushil Koirala, Ramchandra Poudel and Sher Bahadur Deuba were initially positive about the proposal put forward by the UCPN (M) to set up an election government led by the chief justice. However, many central committee members strongly opposed the idea. So we ruled out the possibility of accepting the sitting CJ as the executive head at today's meeting.

Why do you think they were positive and willing to accommodate the Maoist proposal?

They think by agreeing to the plan, Baburam Bhattarai will resign and fresh elections can be held.

But then the same leaders have also cited the fundamental democratic principle of the separation of powers, didn't they mention that?

They argue that this is the only way to break the impasse and we must remain flexible at such a sensitive time.

Why do you think senior NC leaders are increasingly focusing only on the Maoists' proposal?

It is like the Maoist leaders assigned a homework and our leaders are dutifully completing it. The meeting today also made it clear that the NC's leadership is becoming ineffective and unsuccessful day by day. It is appalling that we are even discussing the Maoists' proposal. When our bid to lead the country was tabled, no one paid much attention and it was quickly dismissed. But the Maoists' fickle proposals that will only push the country backward, unfortunately manage to garner so much interest within our party.

Who else were in favour of the new proposal?

A few officials and central committee members. They say that sometimes the party is greater than the leadership and sometimes the country is greater than the leadership, and under such difficult circumstances backing the Maoists' plan is the right decision.

What arguments were put forward by those opposed to this plan?

If the principle of separation of power is not respected, then the foundation of democracy is compromised. If this happens, we might as well shut down the party. If ending the current political deadlock is the priority and this is the only remaining option we should have just agreed on the Maoist party's original 'people's constitution'. Had that happened we could have even led the government.

Yes holding elections should be our main goal and for that we are willing to withdraw our candidacy from the electoral government, but that doesn't mean we give up our democratic norms and values. The NC should have put its foot down and turned down the proposal straightaway. Unfortunately, some members decided to play by the Maoists' rules.

So what is the alternative then?



Going to polls by 29 May is our greatest priority and for that the NC is ready to work on a unity government even if it is led by some other party, but with consensus on upcoming polls. If the parties cannot decide on leadership we are even willing to accept an independent candidate chosen collectively. The Congress now needs to take the initiative to implement this alternative plan and decide on the formation of a new government in the few days.

If the Maoists don't agree, then that will put us back to square one. Don't you think the conditions are becoming increasingly unfavorable for polls in May?

There is no point rushing into elections that will jeopardise the values of democracy. Although it doesn't sound pleasant right now, pushing the polls by a few months won't make a big difference. Since the day the Maoists rejected our party president's candidacy to lead the electoral government, we have been open to holding polls even under the leadership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal just so that Nepal can move ahead. The NC can and will sacrifice whatever is required to hold polls on time, but the country should not be asked to make these sacrifices.

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NEPALI TWEETS

तिब्बती भिक्षुले बोद्धमा आफैले पेटोला खन्याएर जलाएको समाचार हाका टिभीहरूमा देखिएन नि, कि मैलेमात्रै नदेखेको हो? भोलिको पत्रिकामा नि?

Is it only me who didn't see it or did none of the TV channels report on the news of the Tibetan monk who set himself on fire in Boudha? And will there be any coverage in tomorrow's papers?

नेपाली न पहाडे, न मधेशी, न हिमाली मलाई नेपाली भएर बाँच्न देउ सुन्यो तिमीले मलाई नेपाली भएर बाँच्नदेउ नेपाली हामी रहन्छौ कहाँ नेपालै नरहने

Nepalis, not Pahadis, not Madhesis, not Himalis. Let me live as a Nepali, do you hear me as a Nepali. Where will we Nepalis be if Nepal doesn't exist?

घण्टा बीर नेपाली ? देशमा दैनिक जस्तो घलीवेटी झुन्ड माथि खुल्न खुल्न हिँड्दा हिँडा खोर पनि बाल मतलब दिएर वस्ने के का बीर नेपाली?

Brave Nepalis, my foot. What kind of bravery teaches you to look the other way when women are abused openly almost every day?

सबै काम twitterले गर्दा रैछ ! सरकारी हण्डी खवाएर सचिव किन पाल्ने ! लोडसेडिग अस्ति twitterले घटायो अब ग्यास पनि twitterले घटाई दिन्छ हैन ?

Twitter does everything. It reduced load-shedding a few weeks ago and now slashed the price of gas. Why keep government secretaries on the payroll?

भ्यालेण्टाइन के मा उपहारस्वरूप बुढीलाई ग्यास सिलिण्डर किन्नु पर्ला जस्तो छ... ग्यास पनि अब अमूल्य बस्नु नै हुने भो नेपालीको लागि

Think I'll give my wife a gas cylinder on Valentine's day. It is priceless for Nepalis these days.

पधानमन्त्रीज्यू तपैकै बारेमा 'दिवटदै' हुनुहुन्छ !... 'दिवटर' मै 'फलो' गर्नु रे !

"The Prime Minister is tweeting about you right now. And he told me to tell you to follow him on Twitter."

Abin in *Kantipur*, 14 February

जनयुद्ध-२०५२-२०६३

धनयुद्ध-२०६८-२०६९

People's War, 1996-2006

War of wealth, 2011-2013

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in *Rajdhani*, 13 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Some legal experts think that the chief justice cannot become prime minister. I am not a law student, but as a lawmaker I am prepared to discuss each article in the constitution with them.”

Baburam Bhattarai, *Naya Patrika*, 13 February

WANT POLLS?

Narayan Wagle in *Nagarik*, 14 Febuary
नागरिक

If you want elections on time, you must first fill vacant positions at the Election Commission. The terms of three commissioners ended on the same day earlier this year, but they can easily be re-appointed if the parties agree and the government sends a referral to the president. In fact, they were appointed six years ago the same way, and this would avoid the politicising of appointments and further uncertainty and tokenism.



There is also the need to re-demarcate constituencies based on the new census results, especially for Kathmandu and the Tarai. But there is no time, the parties seem determined to hold elections by 29 May, and have shown an unsettling disregard for what that would entail. There is also still time to redraw voters' lists and IDs, and the only way to do this is to make sure the EC is fully staffed. Announcing election dates will only make sense if the EC is complete. The prime minister announced polls for November last year, and postponed it to April this year. Now the parties want elections by May. But this is not a party election, and only the EC can hold polls.

The parties know very well that democracy cannot survive without elections and it will be five years since the last polls on 10 April. More important than whether or not the Bhattarai-led coalition stays in power is to form an EC which can hold free and fair elections.

Kavre to Singapore

Himal Khabarpatrika, 15 December
हिमाल

Prem Lama of Sanga in Kavre was ridiculed when he established Ashapuri Organic Farm eight years ago. Spread across five hectares, the farm now produces 30 kg of vegetables daily helping Prem earn Rs 1.5 million each month from the sale of 60 varieties of vegetables and fruits in Kathmandu and Singapore. "There is a high demand for mushroom and yakon (ground apple) in Singapore," says Lama.

Govinda Sharma of Pattale Khet has also found a niche in the international market. Many farmers in Kavre have been inspired by Sharma and Lama's success stories and have made Kavre the epicentre of organic farming in Nepal.

Just a few years ago farmers were heavily dependent on chemical fertilisers for protection against pests and to increase production from small area. But with increasing awareness about the adverse effects of chemical fertilisers, farmers have changed their ways. Kavre annually produces 150,000 tons of fruits and vegetables half of which is sold in Kathmandu, and the rest exported.



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What did he know, and when did he know it?

So Kentucky has decided on a new motto: 'Kicks Ass'. Drat, they beat us to it. That was a slogan yours truly, Gluteus Maximus, had set aside for our own Maoist Plutocratic Republic to replace the traditional feudal national motto on our coat of arms which goes, 'Motherland is Greater Than Heaven' or words to that effect.



Which brings us to the need to modify Nepal's coat of arms to move with the times. We have removed most vestiges of the monarchy era, including the crown, royal standard, and the holy cow. The new coat of arms of Revolutionary Nepal will replace the cow with the Donkey, which the cabinet will officially declare the country's new national animule. At the rate we are eating danfes, our national bird is soon going to be extinct, so the pheasant has been replaced with the more ubiquitous urban crow. The holy river in the emblem will now resemble the Bagmati, Mt Everest will

be devoid of snow because of climate change, and the crown's place will be taken up by a centurion helmet.

Not deterred by ridicule, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai is boldly going where no prime minister has gone before by spending one night a month in a poor Nepali's home and eating what they eat. By now he has worked his way through grasshopper chutney, barbecued rat, and monkey curry. Given his record for protecting war criminals, we wonder if he is ever going to be allowed into the UK. But if BRB is granted a British visa he can also partake of horse meat when he orders a burger at the Bountiful Cow in Holburn.

I had thought it would be possible to write a column this week without mentioning Justice Kill Raj and his chances of becoming prime minister and spare you the bother, but no such luck. Rumour has it that the idea first

originated in the lawn of the Claridge's Hotel about a month or so ago and was communicated to the Baddies by none other than Comrade Octopus. PKD took this as a great opportunity to remove BRB from power after the convention, but what he keeps forgetting is that Lal Dhoj is an even more of a Machiavellian schemer than him. While the PM appeared to be pushing the CJ formula, what he was really doing from behind the scenes was paying lip service to the proposal knowing fully well that it would be shot down by the opposition. He even blurted out that the alternative to the CJ as PM was his own continuation in office. PKD, UML, and NC had no idea BRB was running circles around them. And as an added bonus, by dangling the lolly successfully in front of Justice Kill he also demolished the Chief Justice's reputation and defanged the Supremo Court in one swell foop. If only the Doc would use his proven genius in wheeling and/or dealing to get the country moving again.

The real question now is what did the Chief Justice know, and when did he know it? The chronology, according to some, goes way back to his appointment as CJ during the PKD regime when he was pulled up from his fourth ranking position in the justice bench. BRB then summoned him over the wall to the Balu Water Palace to tempt him with an offer of PMship that he couldn't refuse. Kill Raj seems to have swallowed it hook line, and sinker, because not once did he ever deny that he was in the running, he didn't even try to salvage his standing by saying his appointment went against the fundamental democratic precept of the separation of powers. But the man seems to have finally had his doubts on Wednesday when he told the Baddies no way he was going to resign prior to being appointed PM. Must have dawned on him that he could be neither PM nor CJ.

So the govt will be shelling out GBP 7 lacks to pay the defence lawyers of Colonel Lama? Why should tax payers pay for the defence of someone who tortured a tax payer? How about sending the legal bills to ex-majesty King-ji?





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