

NEPALI Times

#667

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KATHMANDU

ECONOMY, STUPID

Nepal cannot afford to wait till it straightens out its politics to rescue the economy

EDITORIAL
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ANI LA

Ani Choying Drolma hits the high note with her collaboration with renowned Indian composer AR Rahman.

PAGE 7

ASIAN NOBEL

The advocacy group, Shakti Samuha, which was set up by survivors of sex trafficking, received the Ramon Magsaysay award for its work to rehabilitate young Nepali women rescued from brothels. Charimaya Tamang speaks about her activism.

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Trash Heap of History

Garbage has piled up in Lalitpur because dumping trucks can't drive on muddy roads to the landfill site. The writing on the wall exhorts students to vote for the Revolutionary Students' Union, promising a 'clean educational environment'. Just when you thought the Maoists had brought closure on their revolution, we are back to square one with the UCPN(M) threatening to fight off rival CPN-M who want to sabotage the November polls.

INSIDE OUT PAGE 3
BY MUMA RAM KHANAL

BIKRAM RAI

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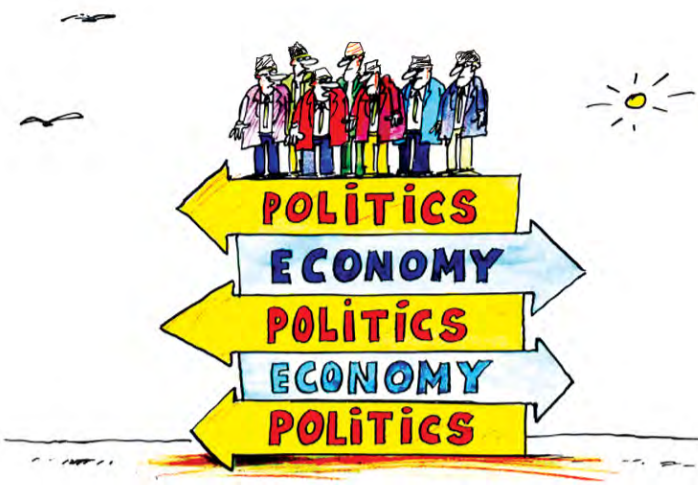
ECONOMY, STUPID

Just to change the subject from endlessly pontificating from this pulpit with unsolicited advice to politicians, this week we take a look at the country’s dire economic straits.

If you think our politics is a mess, you should take a look at our economy. The two are, of course, interconnected. But it has now got to the point where Nepal cannot afford to wait till it straightens out its politics to rescue the economy. We can no more use the excuse of ‘political transition’, ‘constitution’ or ‘election’ to attract much-needed trade and investments. Businesses have much greener pastures in Vietnam, Burma or even Sikkim or Himachal.

Some figures: 450,000 young Nepalis join the labour force every year, but no new jobs were created in manufacturing or construction last year because there was virtually no investment. At any given time, 18 per cent of our population is working abroad. And since most of them are young men, it means up to 60 per cent of men in their productive age are in India, the Gulf or Malaysia. Nepal’s trade deficit with India grew to NPR 316 billion in the last fiscal year: our exports to India grew by only 0.4 per cent, but imports grew 25 per cent. Petroleum imports from India alone doubled in three years, and now constitutes 40 per cent of imports from India due mainly to demand from generators.

Nepali migrant workers overseas sent home an estimated \$4 billion. We like to say that this is propping up the economy. Actually, those dollars sent home goes to pay mainly for third-country imports of electronic consumer goods, cars or gold bullion. What is actually keeping the Nepali economy afloat is the INR sent home by the estimated 2 million Nepalis who work in India



Nepal cannot afford to wait till it straightens out its politics to rescue the economy

as seasonal migrants at any time. It is clear that Nepal’s widening trade gap with India is unsustainable.

Nepal has to either export more to India, or it needs to earn more INR to pay for growing imports from India. Yet, look at the way we maintain relations with our biggest trading, investment and business partner: there hasn’t been a Nepali ambassador in New Delhi for nearly three years now, and Nepal’s national airline which used to have 14 flights a week to four Indian destinations at one time now doesn’t fly to anywhere in India. Despite lip service, we have done nearly nothing to lure even a small

fraction of the huge outbound Indian tourism market next door.

At a Nepal-India Business Conclave organised on 26 July by the Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) in Kathmandu, government officials, academics, Indian and Nepali investors spoke about ways to redress some of the problems in bilateral trade, investment and tourism. One of the speakers, Srikanth Srinivasamadhavan of Unilever Nepal listed eight steps that Nepal can take right away without waiting for a resolution of the political uncertainties (see page 4).

Actually we know what the problems are, we also have the solutions. But we just can’t seem to get over the lethargy and inertia even on cooperation we have already agreed on like the cross-border petroleum pipeline, streamlining trade across the Siliguri corridor, or the use of Vizag port.

The formula for economic revival and to push GDP growth is quite clear: massive investment in transportation, energy and irrigation infrastructure to generate jobs so that even more jobs are created by downstream industries when those projects are completed.

If by then there is surplus power, we can always export it to India for premium peak hour prices. But the aim should be to generate cheap hydro-energy so that domestic manufacturing is competitive and foreign investors set up shop here to generate even more jobs.

We Nepalis have such low self-esteem we say we are a small and poor country. The 40th most populous country in the world is not small, it is just small compared to our giant neighbours. And we are not poor, just poorly governed.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

MERRY GO ROUND

I think that Pushpa Kamal Dahal is doing his best to foil the election (‘Merry go round’, editorial, #666). Think about it, Maoists will be the biggest losers if we have an election. Just like the Panchayat days with partyless government, Dahal is the looter instead of Gyanendra. Delhi must ecstatic these days for its game plan in Nepal is working well for the Indian leaders. This only proves the fact that we do not have any Nepali leader who cares about Nepal and Nepalis.

Binay Sharma

I am sure that Nepal will not have election in November. How will we punish the lying politicians for duping us once again. Nepali politicians must be held accountable. It’s a disgrace to have leaders who have continued with their luxurious lifestyle while Nepalis struggle with scarce resources each day.

Mahendra Shakya

ROAD KILL

Nice piece by Nepali Times (‘Road Kill’, Duncan Maru, #666). Road accidents are really an epidemic in Nepal. No lane marking, no warning signals, narrow roads, overloaded vehicles and so on. The government thinks hydro power is everything but road accidents are also among the immediate concerns!

Sanketh Tandan

HIGHWAYS OF DEATH

Small changes such as wearing seatbelts (‘Nepal’s highway of death’, Sunir Pandey, #666), better protective clothing for motor bike riders would make noticeable difference to these statistics.

John Murray



I remember those roads! Be safe. Jeannette Mascorro Jungslager

DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

Criminal gangster are in charge and running our country, example - Pushpa Kamal Dahal, (‘Democratic deficit’, Anurag Acharya, #666). I don’t see any point tolerating these criminal headed political leaders. Wasn’t 20 years of rampage enough to wake us up from the deep slumber, not to mention the sufferings of 99 per cent of Nepalis. Can 1 per cent of Nepalis really express the rule of law and democracy in Nepal? The communist will never be able to bring fame and prosperity to our country. Nepal needs a military dictator and not a fake democracy. Who will come to our rescue and save us?

Binita Pradhan

POWERLESS FUTURE

We may be overwhelmed by the power cut of 6-16 hours a day, but we should not forget our 80 per cent of Nepal’s rural population has been living in darkness all their lives(‘Powerless future’, Bhrikuti Rai, #666). Big hydro dams prioritised in this year’s budget

may supply power to national grid for urban population’s use but they will not cater to the power needs of poor rural households. Investing in small or micro hydro, distributed energy projects make more sense than placing huge bets on big hydro power projects. There is a huge potential for maximising energy productivity in rural area where country’s industrial raw materials are concentrated.

Sabita Thapa

NO HORN PLEASE

In addition to the fines from Rs1,000 to 5,000, condemn the offenders to 1 hour of continuous horn in a (class) room ala MAPASE lecture (‘(No) horn please!’ Tsering Dolker Gurung, #666). Also, ask the four-wheeler and two-wheeler traders to cross check and remove all horns that make noise above the legal decibel. This can be implemented at the transport office while changing the ownership. Create more no-horn zones especially in the alleys where pedestrians have the first right of way. Kathmandu valley is a small place and there is no need to

speed and honk while driving and riding as it will not get you any further.

Jwahar Talchabhadell

In addition to the horns, don’t forget the excess flicking of headlights on a high beam mode much for the same purpose as the horn. It is very dangerous and equally annoying.

Flicker

FOUR PARTY DICTATORSHIP

Gyan-dai’s contribution of 25 lacs is a pea-nut (‘Four-party dictatorship’, Ass, #666). He should contribute 25 lacs each to every 75 districts for welfare fund and then see the result. He can do this without batting an eyelid, but poor soul he is a dravya pisach.

Tapan Das

Political party leaders’ mode of operation and staying in power and getting richer at faster rate is based on their conduct of corruption. It is like the arsonist himself is working as the chief of fire brigade. We need a genuine fire brigade chief to put out the rampant blaze of corruption. That time has to come soon to extinguish fire and save the nation and its inhabitants.

Nyaya Bahadur

MAKING NEWS

When the politics of this country is so interesting and the politicians so cartoon like, why would people be interested in other things (‘Too good to be true’, East-West, www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/kundadixit)

Faris

True. Media now must mend it

mentality by digging out matters that really not only spotlight ‘talking of lives’ but also ‘saving of life’, as Kunda Dixit states.

Birat Anupam

I enjoyed reading your encouraging news on positive health gains on Nepali women and children. I would like to draw your attention to recent article by Dr Mrigendra R Pandey for the account of development of smokeless stove based on research done by his team in 1970’s. Similarly Jeevan Jal (oral rehydration solution) must have saved millions of lives from diarrhea dehydration over the decades. Adoption of open defecation free (ODF) community code is definitely another step on the right direction. It would be helpful to have a VDC-wide map to see distribution of areas where the program could be implemented. Finally, to complement these excellent community based programs boiling drinking water would break the chain of infectious disease transmission.

Gaury S Adhikary, MD

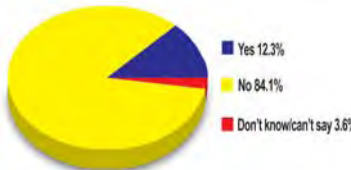


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Weekly Internet Poll #667

Q. Do you think UML leader Madhav Nepal’s visit to India will improve his party’s performance in the upcoming CA elections?

Total votes: 1,405



Weekly Internet Poll # 668. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think elections will happen on 19 November?



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Revolution comes full circle

Until the contradiction within the Maoist party is resolved, Nepal's peace process will not have closure


INSIDE OUT
Muma Ram Khanal

The Maoist revolution is beginning to look like Kathmandu's road-widening project. Just when you think it is over, they start digging up the roads again.

We all thought that there had been closure on the peace process after the integration of the 1,300 Maoist fighters into the Nepal Army in May. But the split in the Maoists has brought us back to a full circle again.

The CPN-M started raking up old issues we thought were resolved as soon as the integration was officially completed. Unless the demands of the Dash Maoists are settled, elections held, and the constitution written and ratified, therefore, we will not be in a position to declare with certainty that the peace process is concluded.

Despite the lip service everyone is paying to elections, it is the two factions of the Maoist party that is most reluctant to face polls. The UCPN(M) says it is serious about elections and its leaders have fanned out across the country in campaign mode, but they are really just trying to gauge the pulse of the people.

After the symbolic destruction of a ballot box last week, the CPN-M is on a two-pronged strategy creating mayhem while talking. In a

sense, the Dash poll sabotage campaign strategy complements the Cash Maoists who are reluctant to face voters in November. The NC and the UML benefit from the split Maoist vote, and are happy as long as they don't get blamed for being against polls.

This is why the prospect of elections is up in the air no matter what the Regmi regime or the Election Commission may say. The antics of the two Maoist parties have confused voters, and made them even more apathetic about elections.

The end of the conflict left a lot of loose ends that were never tied. The period after 2006 saw non-transparent decision making by the Big

Four that progressively made Nepal more dependent on the outside. The CA had to be dissolved because the promises and slogans to the marginalised and disenfranchised could not be kept, and fissures within the Maoist party erupted in the open.

The election tactics of both

Maoists is to weaken each other. Mohan Baidya has vowed to sabotage elections, while Pushpa Kamal Dahal has announced that the YCL will be deployed to attack those who attack polling booths. The YCL is already on the rampage in Chitwan, presaging the strong-arm tactics of its campaign.

Outwardly, it looks like one is for and the other against elections. But internally, both are against. Both Maoists think they have sufficient support to defeat each other if they separately contest polls. So the UCPN(M) doesn't want the CPN-M to take part. The CPN-M meanwhile wants elections postponed until it musters at least as much support as its rival. In a way, this rivalry is an extended playing out of the unfinished business of the conflict.

After the formation of non-political interim government led by a Chief Justice, the CPN-M tried to fill the role of the main opposition party, which to a certain extent it has succeeded in doing. This has allowed it to benefit from the anti-incumbent factor, and be the voice of those disillusioned with the status quo.

However, it would be a mistake to see only the CPN-M as the obstacle to elections even if it has taken the retrogressive road to a royalist revival

to trumpet its nationalist line. But that is no different that the UCPN-M's unprincipled and chameleon-like partnership with the Madhesi parties and new ethnicity-based parties.

The opportunistic tendency of Nepali Maoism means it can concurrently be everything to everyone: it can be pro-Indian, pro-Chinese, monarchist, republican as long as it gets the party closer to state capture and absolute power.

For a while last month, after Dahal went to Singapore on the pretext of treating his wife and Baidya went to China, it looked like the party may be headed for re-unification. Baburam Bhattarai's resignation from vice-chairmanship of the party had made such a reunion even more likely. Dahal rushed back to meet Indian Minister of External Affairs, Salman Khursid, and that destroyed the half-built bridge between the two factions.

Jointly, the two Maoists can reinforce each other's opposition to polls in November. This will not just mean no elections, but it will delay the constitution-writing process, and prolong this period of never-ending uncertainty and instability.

Managing Nepali politics now means managing the contradiction within the Maoist party. Until we do that, there will be no closure. ■

Muma Ram Khanal was a Central member of the Maoist party during the conflict. This is the second of his fortnightly column, Inside Out, in Nepali Times.



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Believing in Nepal

Eight economic reform actions on how to get over this difficult phase to make Nepal stronger



**GUEST COLUMN**
Srikanth Srinivasamadhavan

In the last two decades, Nepal has been constantly trying to redefine itself socially, politically and economically. This transition period has been defined by a low GDP growth rate, attempts of various model of self sufficiency, a low domestic savings rate, a high dependence on foreign aid and high unemployment. The response needs to be drastic and quick, and the reforms need to go ahead despite the fluid situation. The most basic and important focus of the economy has to be on stimulating domestic demand. This has helped many other countries

- grow and prosper, and Nepal should also intensify efforts through quick reforms to boost demand that will build a more competitive economy that benefits businesses and consumers alike.
- In order to improve Nepal's economy to boost investment and demand, here are eight action areas:**
1. Stimulate local consumption and incentivise local manufacturing. This will not only generate employment but also create a strong competitive environment to generate consumption and demand. The government needs to differentiate between companies who have invested locally and stayed on so as to encourage investment and enable faster and cheaper innovation that drive local consumption, and perhaps give rise to export opportunities. Facilitating and stimulating local
 2. Improving tax collection. Create greater drive and stronger mechanisms for tax collection and enable other reforms. Proper VAT implementation will help the government generate even more revenue from a reduced VAT rate in future as the base expands.
 3. Encouraging domestic savings. Savings help fund economic growth and ensure that the current underemployed working population will be able to find local jobs more easily. Nepal has a significant advantage due to its robust remittance. Continued progress in remittance, and increased work opportunity locally will be key drivers for higher GDP growth.
 4. Key sector reforms. Focus on deregulating tourism, power, education, IT, banking etc so the country can generate large-scale employment and

benefit from technology transfer and practices. In the medium term, this will make Nepal an attractive investment destination and the expertise will make Nepal sought-after in advising and generating revenue with its presence in other countries that want to emulate Nepal.

5. Improving infrastructure reliability and access. Infrastructure bottlenecks to growth are keeping Nepal back. Improving road connections to towns and villages and increasing access to electricity are challenges facing Nepal today. Improving infrastructure reliability, reducing cartelisation and transportation time are important areas for reform.
6. Shifting emphasis from foreign aid to foreign investment. Foreign aid is driven by the ideology of charity and relief. It sometimes promotes inequality, dependency, and in many cases may not be aligned to what the country wants to do. Foreign investment, on the other hand, allows one to demand equality, promotes incentives to grow, creates atmosphere for self-reliance and empowerment.
7. Protecting intellectual property. Globally, the development of new products and services have been possible because of significant research and development. Foreign investors will seek strong protection for their intellectual property. While a country seeks investments, along with it comes the burden of protecting the investment from elements that will undermine future investments. Enforcing intellectual property rights, curbing copies and the gray market will allow Nepal to protect and drive innovation and create a platform for driving a vibrant economy.
8. Strengthening labor reform. Simplified labour laws will help to drive the confidence of the investors, and can be a significant driver of foreign investment. Such laws will help set up large scale projects that can provide the much needed export earning. Nepal needs to seize this opportunity to become an exporter of limited but focused set of industries with significant cost advantage and a skilled, English- speaking workforce. Nepal's location between India and China will be an advantage if it combines this with a strong partnership with other emerging economies.

Despite having gone through tumultuous changes over the past two decades, Nepal is poised to forge ahead. There is more optimism now than there ever was in the past, reflecting the indomitable spirit of the Nepali people. It is now time to act on reforms. 

Srikanth Srinivasamadhavan is the Managing Director of Unilever Nepal, and this piece is adapted from his presentation to the Nepal-India Business Conclave organised by the Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) in Kathmandu on 26 July.

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The business of elections

After the Election Commission announced its Code of Conduct last week for the November polls, Nepal's business community has also revealed its own code in which it has told political parties it will not contribute to campaign financing.

At a function attended by government head Khil Raj Regmi, the National Business Initiative (NBI) on Sunday said it would prioritise consumer rights, strive for transparency, ensure environmental protection and not continue anymore to support political parties and politicians.

The code is supported by more than 30 business organisations involved in construction, manpower, handicraft, LPG, tourism and other areas. "At a time when every sector of the state is failing, we want business to take the lead in restoring confidence and transparency," said NBI's Padma Jyoti about the code.

Also on Sunday, the FNCCI organised its first of a series of interactions with political parties on how their election manifesto can be business-friendly. Sunday's meeting was with the Nepali Congress and was attended by NC president Sushil Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba.

"It was the first post-1990 NC government that adopted a free market economy and freedom of expression that ensured 8 per cent growth rate," said FNCCI president Suraj Vaidya, "we need that political will to attract investment, create jobs, generate power and lift the country's economy."

However, the NC politicians used the forum to heap blame on Maoists and royalists for destroying the economy. Koirala and other NC leaders said that for a free market to develop fully, it needed democracy.

The FNCCI gave the politicians a checklist for their election manifesto that includes a collective commitment to raise the per capita GDP growth rate, guarantee private property rights, raise productivity and generate jobs, transparency and regulating labour.

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GITANJALI
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New ride

Continental Associates, authorised distributor of Kia Motors in Nepal has unveiled the new model of Rio. With a 1.4 l gamma engine and motor drive power steering, the brand new Rio is available both in hatchback and sedan. Price starts from Rs 3,249,000.



The Power to Surprise



and taste of the brand reads the press statement. It is available in 24 pack size cartons.

Drink to that

Gorkha Brewery launched the Carlsberg 330 ml bottle last Friday as a line extension to the existing Carlsberg 650ml bottle. Carlsberg 330ml comes in a unique embossed green bottle and guarantees to deliver the same quality

Fair Flight

Qatar Airways extended support to the Nepali women football team, representing the 'C' Division outfits Kathmandu Club. The team, left on Qatar Airways flight last Saturday evening, for Norway to participate in the Norway Cup U-18 seven-a-side Football Tournament scheduled for 27 July to 4 August.



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Musical company

Tuborg announced 'Tuborg Stage-Let's Get Loud', a nationwide concert that will see Nepal's top musicians perform across cities. The two-month long event which begins on 10 August is a free-for all concert.



Helping hand



Thai Airways International organised a blood donation program on 31 July in Kathmandu to commemorate 21 years of the fatal air crash in 1992. More than 100 people including family members of those were killed in the air crash donated blood to the Red Cross Society blood transfusion service.

Beauty regime

Laavanya Luxury Ayurveda has launched new offer for its skin care products. Customers will receive Rs 1,100 off on the purchase of Laavanya radiance cream and deep nourishing cream reads the press release.



Show me the money

Everest Bank's operating profit increased by 34.14 per cent bringing the total profit for the last fiscal year at Rs 240. 17 million. The data was presented at the meeting of the board of directors on 31 July.



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Run, Milkha run

Biopic of India's most famous athlete distorts his determination

Beyond the debate over what is fact and fiction in Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, the new Bollywood biopic of the 1960s Indian Olympic athlete, the film's most troubling aspects are the unidimensional depiction of the horrors of the partition of India and Pakistan. The plot is in variance with Milkha Singh's own account to the Times of India, which conducted the interview with him four years ago but decided to can it until the film's release.

No doubt, the Partition traumatised Milkha Singh, as he was witness to the killing of his parents. In the interview to the newspaper, Milkha says it is one of the two experiences of his life he can never forget.

The other was the medal he missed in the 1960 Rome Olympics. The film etches out the disabling aspect of his trauma through the symbolism of looking back, thus injecting a profound meaning to his inexplicable decision to glance behind as he ran the scorching 400m race in Rome. This momentary lapse of concentration cost Milkha a medal.

Milkha's age have been manipulated to inject greater emotional content for rendering credible the narrative of the partition which, in many ways, echoes the memory of the tragedy refracted through the Hindutva prism?

Indeed, Milkha remembers the tragedy differently. He says in the interview that trains full of dead bodies prompted the outsiders to incite the Muslim villagers, who were told "why were they letting kafirs live around them when the dead bodies of Muslim brothers are being sent from there (India). Kill them..."

Trains full of dead bodies, we know through other narratives, provoked massacres in both India and Pakistan, but this perspective is simply cast aside in the film. Such one-sided narratives of the partition have been assiduously spun in both India and Pakistan to fan feelings of victimhood.

The film also tampers with another historical event: the holding of the Indo-Pakistan friendship athletics meet in Lahore. In the reel-life, it is shown to have taken place following the Rome Olympics. The chronology was in fact the reverse: the Lahore meet happened months before Milkha failed to bag an Olympic medal in Rome. Perhaps the sanitised version of the partition demanded that Milkha overcome his traumatic past on Pakistani soil.

Milkha visits his village, kneels down and cries bitterly, presumably exorcising himself of the ghosts of the past. Invigorated, he runs the race of his lifetime, doesn't glance back, and eclipses his Pakistani rival. Stunned Pakistanis give him a standing ovation and Field Marshal Ayub Khan bestows on the victorious Indian the title of Flying Sikh.

What is the message of this belated balancing act, its symbolism? Don't look back at your traumatic past lest it hobbles you? Or that the only way of liberating the present from the past is to vanquish your rivals, and strike awe in them to the point they can't but hail you? What kind of meaning does it hold out for those who are asked to forget the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 and Gujarat 2002?

It is another matter that Milkha Singh is yet to visit his ancestral village in Pakistan, and hopes to fulfil his desire before he dies. The greatness of Milkha is that he ensured the scars of his life didn't impede him from chasing his dreams, nor turn him viciously bitter. In contrast, Bhaag's depiction of him is subtly dressed up in marketable jingoism. 🇮🇳

Ajaz Ashraf was for the last 12 years deputy editor at Outlook magazine. He contributes this weekly column, Look Out, to Nepali Times.



This lapse, we are told, has a story. "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag" (Run, Milkha, run) was what his father screamed as he lay dying during the birth of Pakistan. Milkha's race loss is consequently linked to the partition. From it springs the problem the film seeks to answer is: How does the athlete, and implicitly therefore all of us, overcome the disabling memory of the past?

From the ahistorical plot, it would seem there was no bloodshed in India, no targeted slaughtering of Muslims. The religious passion, of which Milkha's parents were victim, did not abate evident from the structuring of the competition between the ace Indian athlete and the duo of the Pakistani sprinter and his coach, whose only motivation seems to vanquish Hindu-Sikh India.

It can be argued that a biopic can't but portray the world through the perspective of the protagonist. Is Bhaag, therefore, Milkha's memory of the partition? It seems not, because the athlete tells the newspaper: "Our Muslim neighbours, even those in the neighbouring villages, they didn't say anything. But what proved the flashpoint was that those trains which left from there into India and those which came back, all contained corpses. It immediately aggravated the issue."

Milkha was also not the scrawny child as shown in the film. Might not

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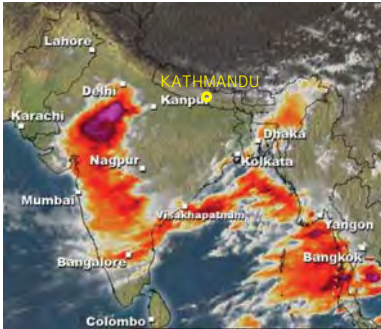
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After few weeks of short and heavy bursts of rain, a major monsoon build-up in the Bay of Bengal will bring sustained rainfall in the coming days. As the southwest monsoon intensifies, eastern and central Nepal will see heavy precipitation. Daytime will see cloud cover and maxima will stay within the 28 to 30 range.

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Nepal's singing nun collaborates with renowned Indian composer A R Rahman



ANI MEETS A.R.

SAHINA SHRESTHA

“Extremely excited and extremely happy,” is how a smiling Ani Choying Drolma describes the moment when Indian music composer A. R. Rahman got in touch with her earlier this year.

For over a decade Ani Choying has brought Buddhist hymns and chants to a mass audience not just in Nepal but around the world. Working with Rahman, who won two Oscars for his music in *Slumdog Millionaire*, on a song from MTV Coke Studio will propel Ani to global stardom.

“I have been a fan of Rahman since the days of Roja, so working with him was truly a wonderful experience,” says Ani. She got the call from Mumbai just before she was

set to leave for a concert in Indonesia, but her initial excitement turned to worry when it looked like the date they wanted her to come clashed with her Indonesia gig. Luckily, Rahman was flexible with the date.

“I have followed him on TV and listened to his music so when I met him, I felt as if I was meeting someone I knew,” Ani told *Nepali Times*. Rahman wanted a song in Nepali so she sang a few lines of compassion Buddha mantra. Rahman loved it and that is what she performed for the show in a mantra fusion.

“I not only got to work with Rahman, but also with Sivamani, a famous percussionist in India,” she says.

They rehearsed together from 1-6 July and Ani says she found Rahman to be a spiritual person, and quite reticent. “His compositions are really different from others, he creates something that touches your heart and spiritualism is the key ingredient,” she told us.

Ani made headlines in the Indian media and was dubbed 'Nepali rockstar' and 'Rock Nun' after performing at two concerts in Mumbai and Pune. She says the show was “surprisingly successful”. She needn't have been, her lullaby-like spiritual songs have been a hit in Nepal, America and Europe, India was just waiting to discover her. Many Indian celebrities including actor Jackie Shroff, musician Leslie Lewis and singer Himsika Iyer attended the program.

Ani is also planning to bring out an album

for the Indian audience. “My music will be the same, only the language will be in Hindi,” she says of the project. She is talking to Indian lyricist Javed Akhtar to render her hits like *Phulko Ankhama* into Hindi.

Ani is soon coming out with a new album which will be for children. Ani thinks parents are not giving their children enough moral and ethical education, and wants to supplement this with the message in music.

“It broke my heart to see a little girl at a program dancing, dressed in adult clothes and behaving like adults,” says Ani. “The moral foundation of society is dwindling which is why I want to sing for children.” Her album will be launched in October and have two cds, the first with songs for mothers to sing for their children, and the second will have songs for children to sing. As with her previous songs, the music is by Nhyoo Bajracharya and the lyrics by poet Durga Lal Shrestha.

Ani's performance with AR Rahman recorded in the Coke Studio will premiere on 15 August on MTV.

nepalitimes.com

Ani's story #571
Ani's school #554
Watch interview



Ani La

UNICEF Nepal has featured Ani Choying Drolma in a public service announcement for its campaign to end violence against children that it is airing over television channels and in cinema halls around the country.

At a function on Wednesday (pictured) Ani recalled how as a girl she and her mother suffered domestic violence from the hands of her father. “I had a lot of anger and violence in me as a child,” Ani recalled, “but I realised that the first victim of violence is the perpetrator himself. My father made me and my mother suffer, but he himself suffered the most.”

UNICEF says violence against children takes many forms in Nepal: corporal punishment in schools, domestic violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, child labour and most of it is unreported. There are an estimated 1.6 million child workers, 5,000 street children and an untold number of children suffer abuse mainly at the hands of their own relatives, teachers, or neighbours.

Ani says in the television spot: “Just because we don't see it, doesn't mean it is not happening.”

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Watch UNICEF's video

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EVENTS



WORD WARRIORS, enjoy slam poetry from this popular group and perform one of your own. 3 August, 1 to 4pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa

Photography Workshop, learn the tricks of basic photography with in-class lectures and practical shooting assignments. Rs 4000, 21 July to 14 August, Sundays and Wednesdays, 5 to 7pm, photo.circle HQ, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, learning@photocircle.com.np



THE LIGHT BULB CONSPIRACY, a story of companies who engineered their products to fail. 2 August, 6 pm, Sattya Media Arts, (01)5523486

Cut! write a script, win \$2700 prize money, and make your own movie. Deadline 15 August, www.newnepalicinema.com/script2013

A Step for Freedom, a painting exhibition by eight young upcoming women artists from Pokhara. 2 to 11 August, 12 to 6 pm except Saturdays, Artist Proof Gallery, New Orleans, Pulchok, Lalitpur

Reflective instances, a joint exhibition of four painters Bhawana Manandhar, Rajesh Manandhar, Niraj Chitrakar, and Ganesh G C. 2 to 19 August, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, www.parkgallery.com.np



FINDING A FAMILY, a film based on the true story of Alex Chivescu's search for a new mom and dad in order to pursue his one passion-education. 3 August, 3 pm, Thames International College, limited seats, for tickets: 9849940527

A People War, an exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through 10 years of insurgency. Everyday except Tuesday, 11 am to 4 pm, (01)5549948, www.madanpuraskar.org

Learn Tai chi, relax and refresh your body and mind and improve the internal harmony of body, mind and spirit. 1st week of August, 6 to 7

pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Gyan Dojo, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel, (01)5521120

Bottoms up, take your taste buds and olfactory nerves on a joy ride at the 10th Annual wine tasting festival at Kilroys. Rs 200 per glass, Rs 800 per half litre. July to August, Kilroy's, Thamel, (01)4250440/41

Event management workshop, bring out the event manager in you in the one day workshop designed to enhance your skills required for effective event management. Rs 1000, 17 August, Staff College, Jawalakhel, register at 9851146713

Voices, join in the discussion with Akhilesh Upadhyay (Chief Editor, The Kathmandu Post) and Sudheer Sharma (Chief Editor, Kantipur). Free entry, 2 August, 3-30 pm, Nepal-Bharat Library, Nepal Airlines Building, New Road

Les Chansons D' Amour, a story about new relationships, love, jealousies. 15 August, 7 to 9 pm, Alliance Francaise, Banshi Ghat Marga, Teku road, Tripureshwor



GOALMARI, Bangladesh's Own Island, a photo exhibition by Bangladeshi photographer Munem Wasif on Bangladesh's water problems. 25 July to 15 August, 10am to 6pm, Alliance Francaise, Teku road, (01)4241163/4242832

DINING



EVEREST STEAK HOUSE, an old-school joint for everything steak, a sanctuary for meat lovers. Thamel, Chhetrapati Chok, (01)4260471

Gaurishankar organic coffee, stop over for a freshly brewed cup of Nepali Arabica on your way to Bhotekosi. 38 Kilo, Kavre



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

Chilly Bar and Restaurant, quality food and wide selection of drinks with great views of Phewa Lake. Lakeside, Hallanchok, Pokhara, (061)463614/463163

Tian Rui, if you're looking for genuine good Chinese food this restaurant is the best place to go. Thapathali

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

Himalayan Pizza, this Italian restaurant has enough options to keep both adults and children coming back for more. Thamel



SAIGON PHO, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lajimpat

Yeok Teck, the most intriguing part of the menu is the variety of 'mock meat' dishes on offer. Bhanimandal

The Yellow House, enjoy sumptuous breakfast prepared with organically source ingredients and the freshest bread this side of town. Sanepa, (01)5522078



HERITAGE KITCHEN AND BAR, quick, friendly service, good Thai food, and the charm of the refurbished old Newari building. Thamel



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THE EDGE BAND, go on a journey with the awesome Nepali rock band as they launch their new album *Alag*. Rs 300 & Rs 500, 3 August, 3 pm onwards, Dipendra City Hall, Pokhara, www.facebook.com/events/694431280573696/



BATTLE OF THE BANDS, watch 12 bands battle it out for the opening spot for Michael Angelo Batio's Live concert in Nepal. Rs 100, 3 August, 1 pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Nattu and the band, catch Youtube star Nattu live. Rs 200, 2 August, 7 pm onwards, Capital Grill, Bhatbhateni, Kathmandu

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Good Morning Nepal!

BBC Nepali Service is expanding its services in Nepal with a new morning program.

Starting 1 August at 6.45 am, BBC Nepali service new 15-minutes show features regional and international news.

The morning show will focus extensively on national and international news and will include fact based, objective and balanced news briefs, analysis, features and interviews.

The hugely popular weekly debate program Sajha Sawal, co-produced by BBC Nepali along with BBC Media Action, which aired every Sunday at prime time will also have a morning slot.

BBC Nepali service can be heard at BBC 103 FM and via more than 260 FM stations throughout the country. Its programs can also be heard online at bbcnepali.com. BBC 103 FM based in Kathmandu also airs programs in English.



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A benefit concert

The youth cell of Ganesh Man Singh Foundation is organising a free concert for the benefit of the flood victims.

With this campaign, the foundation hopes to collect donations and relief materials to aid victims who have been displaced and are facing acute food shortage.

Why not reach for your pockets this Saturday and contribute whatever and however you can to help the victims out? Be a part of this noble deed.

Date: 3 August
Time: 11 am onwards
Venue: Basantapur, Kathmandu
www.facebook.com/events/175616749285813/



A bite of the boot



BIKRAM RAI

Craving Italian? Forget the laborious 15 hour flight to Rome, gather your friends and families and make a quick trip to Soaltee Hotel in Tahachal. Alfresco, the hotel's signature Italian restaurant, just rolled out a revamped menu and is offering delectable delicacies from southern Italian regions of Sicily, Sardinia, and Livorno.

With warm tones, tiled floors, walls adorned with paintings of stunning topography, food items suspended from the ceiling (a local tradition), Alfresco perfectly encapsulates the mood and charm of the boot shaped peninsula. The restaurant overlooks a pool and even has separate section for those who like

to take a puff or two while waiting for meal. Its open kitchen means you get to see each delicacy being made from start to finish in front of your eyes.

Start off with a piping hot bowl of Ribollita (Rs 675), the popular Tuscan soup and then dig into the Scampi marinate All' aglio alle Erbe (Rs 1,150), a dish of fried prawns accompanied by garlic, herbs served with roasted peppers, chili basil that goes delightfully well with the accompanying Nepali sauce.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy a bite-size of bella Italia.

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ALL IN THE P



PHOTOS: BIKRAM RAI

The art of making paper from the fibrous inner bark of the daphne shrub, locally called lokta, dates back to the 8th century. However, by the 1950s cheap machine made papers from India had driven most local papermakers out of business and pushed this ancient tradition to near extinction until Bibendra Shrestha decided to revive it and started Nepal Kagaz Udhyog in 1969.

After the paper found its way into the international market in Europe and the US during the early 1990s, business boomed. Today rainbow hued lokta paper accessories, wallpaper, notebooks, cards, lamps, and

even clothing have found homes from China to Chile. In Japan, the fibre is used in making the country's currency the yen. The Nepali-made paper's huge popularity was evident when Beijing's Grand Hyatt Hotel needed to redesign its wall panels for the 2008 Olympics, it outsourced the order to Sherpa Everest Art Paper, a lokta factory in Bhaisipati run by Lhakpa Geljen Sherpa.

Encouraged by the surging international demand, Hari Kumar Kadel opened his own factory - SP Handmade - in Bhaktapur in 2011 after working for ten years in the industry. Business picked up within a year and Kadel is now able to export handmade paper to the UK, Sweden, and Japan and makes Rs 1.5 to 2 million a year even with a modest plant with



4

PAPER

Quality control and sustainability remains the two major concerns for one of Nepal's top exports.



6

only four workers.

Currently there are over 500 lokta producers in Nepal employing about 50,000 workers, mostly women. However, as demand rises and new firms mushroom every year, entrepreneurs are having a difficult time finding a steady supply of lokta plant. Grown at an altitude of above 3,000 metres, daphne shrubs are found in 55 districts of Nepal. Like sugarcane, the plants are harvested by cutting the stems about 30cm above ground.

"Finding raw material is a challenge," admits Kadel who usually gets his barks from Jiri, Dhading and Sindhupalchok. To ease this problem, commercial farming of lokta has started in a few districts of eastern Nepal, but sustainability remains a challenge.

The industry has survived the test of time through its eco-friendly production, fair employment practices, and socially responsible behaviour. But as more players enter the business and as a major export market like the EU prepares to implement its 'acid-free paper' policy from 2014 onwards, there is a real need for a quality control mechanism that will ensure production standards are maintained across the board. Having a national monitoring body will not only help entrepreneurs who are currently forced to send their products to India for testing cut costs, but also guarantee the long-term prosperity of the ancient papermaking art. 🇳🇵

Tsering Dolker Gurung



7



8

(1) Brothers Sushil and Prajwal play with barks at the factory where their parents work. (2) The bark is cooked in boiling water for softening. After which it is washed in cold water, and beaten with a wooden stick to produce a sticky pulp. (3) A half jug of the pulp is mixed with water to produce a sheet of paper. (4) Kumari Nepali, an employee at the factory spreads the mixture evenly using a wooden frame. (5) Factory owner Hari Kumar Kadel arranges freshly made lokta paper at his factory in Bhaktapur. (6) Women spin yarns out of lokta paper in Balkumari. (7) Wooden frames are used to dry the sheets of paper (8) Printed lokta papers on display at a store in Kupondole.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Remember when you were a kid and you could spend hours daydreaming, your mind embarking on various, vivid adventures that took you to the most exciting, mostly fictitious places? Well, you can still enjoy that kind of adventure, the kind your adult imagination will no longer allow you, when you start a film, any film, by Hayao Miyazaki's famed Studio Ghibli. Over the years, Miyazaki has made a number of masterpieces. And while all of his films are animated, do not think for a moment that this factor makes them any less great than the very best so called 'high-brow' cinema. Miyazaki started working in the early 1960s, in manga as well as in animation. In 1984 when his film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* became a surprise hit, he established Studio Ghibli, which has since produced film after brilliant film. To the faithful followers of Miyazaki the names *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *Ponyo* (2008) will bring back memories of stories that will continue to capture your heart

and imagination over the course of your entire lifetime. To the people who have never heard of him, or have but have somehow passed him by, pick up any of these films immediately; you will not be disappointed. Miyazaki's films work, like the best children's books, on several levels. While the animation aspect affects the sublime part of children's minds, the complex stories and characters are firmly for the adults. As for myself, I have never been able to pick a favourite, but I do have a special place in my heart for *Howl's Moving Castle*, perhaps because the very charming and intrepid female lead is called Sophie. So, you may ask, what exactly is it about Miyazaki's films that make them so special. Well, they are special because they are truly magical. His stories and his animation transcend reality, his characters are utterly captivating, and he is never didactic, always surprising his viewers with his depictions of good vs evil (there are always 'baddies' in the Miyazaki films who redeem themselves, often most hilariously and sometimes very touchingly). For everyone who loves those children who are always a little wiser than their age, animals, and, yes, I know I said it before, magic, then pick up *The Secret World of Arrietty* (2010). While

Miyazaki only scripted this film, making way at the grand old age of 69 (he is now 72) for younger blood, this film is as lovely as a fresh monsoon breeze. Arrietty (voiced by Saoirse Ronan) is a 'borrower', a tiny human girl who lives among us gigantic humans borrowing little things like sugar cubes here and there for their families. When a young boy called Shô (Tom Holland) arrives to recuperate in his pastoral family home (he has a heart condition), Arrietty and he strike up an unusual friendship that is aided by his grandmother Sadako (Phyllida Law), and alternately foiled by Arrietty's parents' disapproval, and the presence of a rather cute, but initially quite vicious family cat. As their friendship deepens, and Niyu, the cat has a change of heart, Arrietty and Shô come of age amongst the luscious nature of Shô's home - both realising, painfully, that their friendship can only be ephemeral. And so *The Secret World of Arrietty* joins the ranks of all the other special Studio Ghibli works, making your children think, and taking you back to those days when you could believe in anything and the power of your imagination was your most precious resource.

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

GIZMO by YANTRICK

All Airs

At the very outset, Yantrick must confess that she has been a life-long PC person. Yes, a politically incorrect Windows loyalist. And whenever peer pressure urged her to turn to Apple, it was either the price or the nervousness of switching to a new operating system that kept her loyal to Uncle Bill. So here I am, approaching middle age, and typing this review of the new MacBook Air on a MacBook Air. The first thing that takes getting used to are the Windows keyboard shortcuts that have become second nature to us PC users so you have to constantly over-ride your muscle memory to switch from Control-C to Command-C when highlighting and copying text. Initially, my finger kept clicking the neighbouring on-off master switch, and I nearly turned the computer off by mistake. Word for PC still seems to have the edge over Word for Mac, but that could just be Yantrick's force of habit. After taking this machine out for a trial sleepover this week, I am hooked. The keyboard is touchy feely, and the predictive editing and spellchecker seem to have a considerably higher IQ than most PCs I am acquainted with. But perhaps the most exquisite thing about MacBooks is the spacious and responsive touchpad. I could use a two-finger light swiping gesture instead of the traditional scroll, to move quickly up and down a doc. A friend who uses the earlier model MacBook Air tells me that the 2013 model has been considerably upgraded with a processor that is faster on its feet, and the new generation wifi doesn't poke around aimlessly when it finds a hot spot. But the most remarkable thing for me is the incredible battery life of the new Air: up to 12 hours in the 13-inch model. That really puts the Acer S3 ultrabook I have now to shame, and the endurance can come mighty handy when the power cuts in Kathmandu are increased to 16 hours come winter. Also handy is the thoughtful backlit keyboard which seems to have been designed with Nepal's darkness in mind. The fine print is that the 12 hours goes down by half if you have many apps open simultaneously, or are using wifi.



This machine has 256 gigabytes of solid state memory, and hits the ground running as soon as you press the on button. The SSD makes the ultrabook ultralight, and Apple has increased battery power in this model without increasing the battery weight. The most unique selling point about the MacBook Air's much-imitated design is its slimness, which means it is ultraportable and slips in snugly into your shoulder bag without any bulky bulges. Apple's attention to detail, the superb finish and feel of the keyboard and skin gives it a certain tactile sensuality. For those of you out there with earlier Airs, you may want to wait till Apple adds Retina screens before you upgrade. Apple notebooks used to be on a much higher price range than PCs. No more. MacBook Airs are surprisingly affordable and are available with Evo Stores (4212100) for Rs 132,000 for the 128 GB model and Rs 155,000 for the 256 GB model.

Yantirck's Verdict: One night out with the sleek and sinewy Air and you will want to defect from PC ultrabooks, however if you already have earlier Macbooks, you may want to wait another year to upgrade.

TEMPLE TREE
RESORT AND SPA

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Graham Anthony Minshaw, marketing adviser for The British College and an international educational consultant with over four decades of experience was in Kathmandu recently to speak at the Kantipur Post Career-Edu fair. Nepali Times caught up with Minshaw to talk about the possibilities and challenges of partnerships between Nepali colleges and British universities.

Nepali Times: How is the university system in the UK different from Nepal?
Graham Anthony Minshaw: The university system in UK seeks to develop students into independent learners. Teachers are there to provide information, to instill curiosity, and to encourage them to question what is taught. But the students also have to take responsibility for their education and explore beyond what is taught in classrooms. I don't see this happening in most Nepali colleges.

How is The British College (TBC) different than other colleges in Nepal?
The British College is getting full franchise from two universities in UK- Leeds Metropolitan University and University of West England. This means TBC has to maintain the same quality of education as the universities in UK. Representatives from Leeds Metropolitan University and University of West England carry out regular inspections to make sure the college has adequate resources and qualified staff to meet the British standards.

British standards at Nepali price

What are the admission requirements for TBC?
Prospective students need to meet the criteria of the universities in the UK. For a three year bachelor's degree, applicants need at least 80 per cent in their 10+2. If they scored less than 80 per cent, they have to enroll in a foundation course at TBC first. Once admitted, students are expected to attend classes regularly and submit work on time. Punctuality is the key. Students cannot pay their way to a degree.

Is it easy for TBC students to transfer to partner universities in the UK?
Students can transfer at the end of each academic year, but they should know that once they enroll at the universities in UK, they have to pay the British fees.

How does a British degree help students in the Nepali job market?
A British degree has international credibility because of the standard,

structure, and quality of education and gives students that extra edge. But the degree in itself doesn't guarantee jobs. What students need to understand is that TBC is an educational institution not a job placement agency.

What possibilities and challenges do you see for Nepali colleges wanting to collaborate with British universities?
The possibilities are enormous. There are many British universities looking for suitable franchise partners in different regions because the soaring price of education means that less and less international students can afford an education in the UK. When students have colleges and universities of global standards in their own country, it's easier for them in terms of finances and also culturally they are more at ease. The challenges is for the Nepali government to monitor and maintain the quality and standard of the universities coming in to Nepal.  www.thebritishcollege.org.np



SOMEPLACE ELSE

If you frequent Thamel's OR2K as much as I do and sometimes long for a bit of ground spiced lamb in your hummus or a beef version of its yummy burgers, I have good news for you. The owners of OR2K, the vegetarian restaurant serving Middle Eastern and Israeli delicacies, have opened a non-vegetarian twin: Friend's Cafe and Bar. Friend's is housed in the same location in Mandala Street where OR2K stayed temporarily while its building was under construction.

Friend's menu tilts more on Spanish inspirations, with few Middle Eastern choices. Although we were tempted to order non-veg versions of my OR2K favourites, we began with the Spanish tapas (Rs 240) served on

bocadillo (Spanish type bread). Friend's lets you pick three from six options, a little stingy for the price I think. We chose the tapas with mushroom, salmon, and chicken sausage. But when it arrived, our salmon was switched with another option: tuna potato salad with hardboiled egg, sans the tuna potato salad. When asked about the lonely egg, the waiter apologised and brought out the salmon. All's well that ends well, the combinations worked great. Special thumbs up for the chicken sausage option, which was served with roasted and pickled bell peppers and mustard.

Next up we had tortilla de patatas (Rs 180). What made this Spanish style potato omelette yum was the aioli side. Aioli is a traditional sauce made of garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, and egg yolks and Friend's had made it perfectly smooth. The Thai salad (Rs 205) was a bowl of beef strips, mixed with bean sprouts, bell peppers, spinach, cucumber, cabbage and cashew nuts, topped with Thai dressing. The grilled beef strips were tender and the salad was a fresh delight.

The star of our visit was the hot pot (Rs 325). The hot pot arrived in an iron cast pan with a dough lid. Under the baked dough blanket was a generous serving of chicken meat balls, soft and well done, simmered in




PICS: PM

richly flavourful tomato sauce. We finished with a chocolate fudge cake: warm, soft, sweet, and delicious with the melted chocolate on top.

Friend's gets good marks on food and decor, but we were slightly disappointed with the service. On one occasion the waiters took so long to respond that I thought that maybe I

had been calling on the wrong person. When someone finally came, he looked like he had just been dragged out of bed. Not to mention, the most comfortable seat in the house seemed to have been occupied by their noisy acquaintances who refused to leave. Note to the owner: check the IP cameras you've installed, I'm not lying.

If the service gets its act together, Friend's will become as popular as OR2K.  PM

How to get there: walk along Mandala Street in Thamel past the entrance to the underground parking. Look out for a flight of stairs on your right, it will lead you up to Friend's.

FRIEND'S CAFE AND BAR



Gosainkunda Festival: The ritual and the risks



Mountains are perceived to be the abode of the gods, and people have sought to obtain religious merit points (*punya* in Sanskrit, *sonam* in Tibetan) by ascending mountains to pray. Moses, Mohamed, Shiva, all have important associations with mountains. Before we discuss the health issues of ascending to these sacred sites, a word about the many high altitude sacred sites in our region.

Damodar Kunda in the Mustang region of Nepal (4,890 m), Muktinath (3,900 m) north of Jomsom, Kedarnath (3,584 m) in Uttarakhand, India (where recently floods damaged the temple and killed thousands of people), Shree Amarnath (4,000m) in Kashmir, Lake Tilicho (4,900 m) in Manang, and, of course, Lhasa, Tibet (3,650 m), are some high altitude sacred sites.

Kailash (6,714 m) also in Tibet is famous because thousands of Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains come to circumambulate the sacred mountain and bathe in the nearby Lake Manasarovar (4,560 m). For Kathmanduites the nearest, well-known sacred mountain lake is Gosainkunda (4,300m).

The Gosainkunda legend is riveting. In their quest for amrit (the elixir for spiritual immortality), the titans and the gods collaborated in churning the ocean. Mount Mandara was selected as the churning stick, Vasuki the king of serpents, would be the churning rope, and Vishnu himself in the form of a tortoise dove into the ocean to support with his back the base of the mountain. After Vasuki had been wrapped around the mountain, the titans laid hold of one end of the rope and the gods the other. They churned for a thousand years.

Unfortunately from the murky depths of the ocean, the first thing to rise was Kalakut,

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2 LITRES AT 2,000m
3 LITRES AT 3,000m
4 LITRES AT 4,000m

AVOID SMOKING
CO₂ INCREASES
HYPERVENTILATION

25,000
VISITORS TO GOSAIKUNDA DURING JANAI PURNIMA

9%
TREKKERS HYPERVENTILATE ABOVE 3,000m

APPROX. ATMOSPHERIC LEVELS OF O ₂		
1,300m	KATHMANDU	17%
2030m	DHUNCHE	16%
3,200m	CHANDAN BARI	14%
3,700m	LAURI BINAYAK	13%
4,380m	GOSAIKUNDA	12%

ONLY HALF MAKES IT TO LUNGS

a deadly poison. The operation could not proceed further until someone drank this concoction. Lord Shiva who was aloof and sitting at a distance was approached. He shook himself from his deep meditation and surveyed the scene. Then he swallowed the poison in one gulp and his throat promptly turned blue (*Nilakhanta*, Blue Throat, is another name for Shiva). He needed to cool off the immense heat generated by Kalakut; so he dove into Gosainkunda Lake. In the memory of this selfless act by Lord Shiva, pilgrims annually take a holy dip in the lake and wash away their sins. But just like for the great Shiva, this pilgrimage is not risk free.

On Aug 20, 2013, the eve of Janai Purnima, Gosainkunda lake will be the venue for the climactic enactment of the greatest Vedic tradition. Starting from Dhunche in Rasuwa district, it is best to take 4 to 5 nights to reach the lake so that you are properly acclimatized. You need to listen to your body and not push ahead relentlessly disregarding symptoms of acute mountain sickness which are chiefly headache and nausea.

Volunteers with accurate knowledge of altitude sickness from the Himalayan Rescue Association and the Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal will also be at hand to help you. Taking diamox, if you don't have sulphate allergy, will help to prevent and treat AMS. Drinking 2 liters of clean water (boiled or treated with chlorine/iodine tablets) per day will help avoid dehydration. Proper rain gear and carrying some table salt to deal with leech bites will come in handy. The lake area is completely packed during Janai Purnima so being psychologically prepared for some of the hardship will help. But you will be amply rewarded for your efforts. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



TOUGH GAME: Nepal's Bikash Thapa (red) in action against India in the 2nd SAFF U-16 Championship final at Dashrath Stadium on Tuesday. Nepal lost 1-0 to India.



LOST: A young boy at a protest in Maitighar organised by Buddhists on Tuesday demanding the installation of a Buddha idol in Surkhet's Kakre Bihar.



SPLASH: A Hindu devotee takes a holy bath in Bagmati river, Sundarijal, on Monday. The month of Shrawan in the Hindu calendar is considered auspicious.

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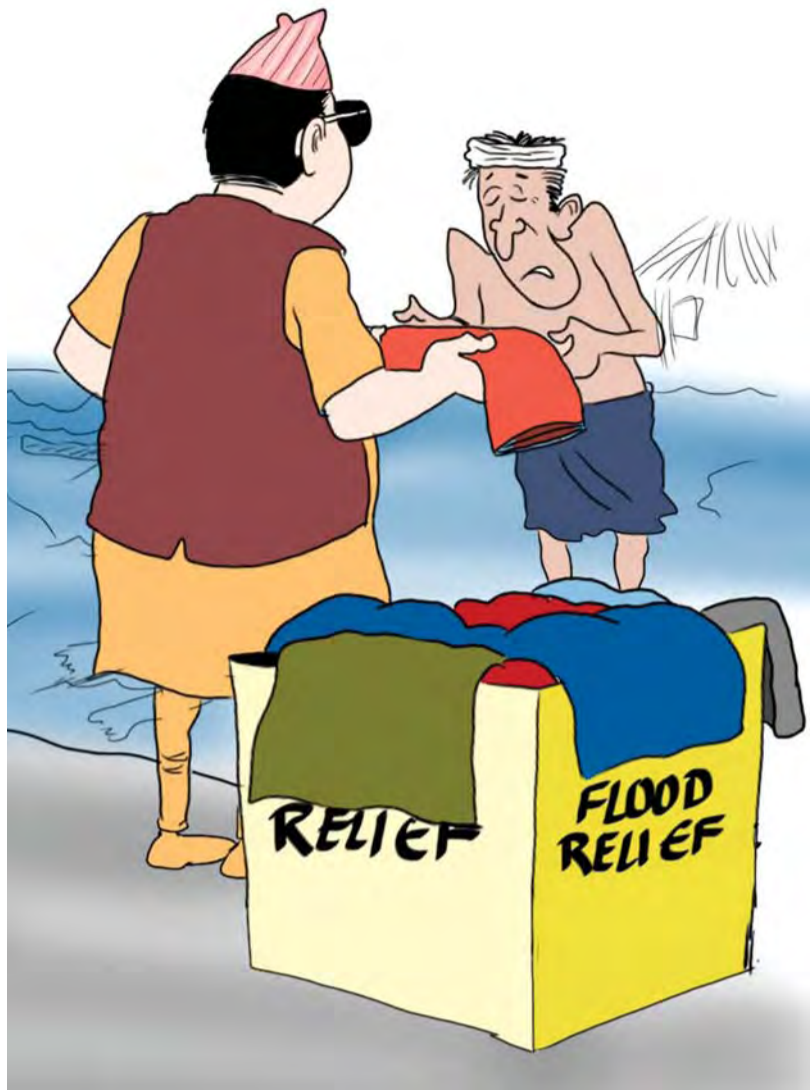
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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Lost crown and country

The country is crying out for someone to step up. But it's not you Mr Gyanendra Shah

PRANAV BUDHATHOKI

So it seems that former king Mr Gyanendra Shah hasn't learnt the lesson that helicoptering to remote areas clad in Wayfarers and offering a limp hand with an inverted lower lip to listen to the public's grievances had its days.

Doling out relief supplies, albeit through daughter-in-law's charity shop, to help people in distress is laudable. But it is far too little, far too late. If charity was on his mind, whatever stopped him from declaring King Birendra's assets and cash for public welfare when he ascended to the throne? It is not like the flood disaster happened only this year, the country has been burning today, and six feet underwater tomorrow, for decades.

Worshiping at strategically located temples is not going to help either. It may strike a right chord with people who still believe in the Vishnu-incarnate, both rich and poor. But if gods and godmen could save him, they would have saved him in 2006.

So is there anything else Mr Shah can do in addition to distributing blankets and rice, or going on public relations pilgrimages? How is he going to make up for the irreparable damage that he inflicted upon us all? He lost a crown — he had it coming — but we lost a country to a horde of snake-oil salesmen posing as politicians entirely because of him.

One thing he would be better off remembering in the grand scheme of things is that the public outpouring to greet him on the streets is a testament to rage against the current crop of politicians, not an approval of him. His statement turning around the monarchist slogan to "Janata au, desh bachau" was clever, but it won't help him redeem his mistakes.

People are sick of the lies and plunder perpetrated by the present lineup of politicians. They are

byproducts of transactions between senile men who have sold the country down the river. But it does not translate into a royal revival. Here is a checklist for the king wanna-be, but never-gonna-be:

- Get rid of your Wayfarer. Chuck it away, or gift it to flood victims, please. You need to muster some courage to look people in their eyes without shades, and acknowledge their existence if you want them to do the same to you.
- Get rid of your current gatekeepers and have-been hangers-on. They not only tell you what you want to hear, they also keep you away from the real Nepalis standing behind the people lined up with garlands: the really poor and the really young.
- Change the name of your daughter-in-law's charity. Slapping a person's name to an organisation will never allow it to bond meaningfully with the people. Jordan's Queen Rania runs Jordan River Foundation. Prince Charles oversees International Business Leaders Forum.
- Set up a Twitter account even if there will be abuse as well as right royal sucking up. Here's your first Twitter post: '@GyanendraShah Education is the silver bullet to transform our country. Schools should be run like palaces. Teachers should earn a six-figure salary'.

The country is crying out for someone to step up. But it's not you. We Nepalis have an ethos at whose core is a healthy disrespect towards the political establishment, that's the only reason people are offering flowers to you. But what you need to understand is that we also love burning effigies of our kings and prime ministers.

Nepalis are not the sheep you thought they were. They see through you. They don't want someone who demolished democracy. The garlands are not meant for you, the people are still waiting for someone who deserves it more. 🇳🇵

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Nepal's most isolated district used to be known for hunger and disease, but new farm methods have improved nutrition and incomes

SUNIR PANDEY in HUMLA



HUMLA NEPAL



From October to March, the scenic but impoverished district of Humla in Nepal's north-western corner is mostly snowbound. The only greens to be seen are the conifers. The summer harvest has to see the district's 50,858 inhabitants through the long, harsh winter.

Even until four years ago, the winter diet of people here used to be limited to buckwheat dhindo and sisnu nettles. Vegetables were even rarer than rice.

In the past few years, Humla's villagers have taken to vegetable farming in a big way, building greenhouses so that they have greens even in winter. When Kal Bahadur Singh (see pic), 46, first heard of greenhouses he thought it was way beyond his means. It took some convincing before he finally took out a loan of Rs 100,000 to extend his farm and build a greenhouse just before winter to grow mustard greens, bitter gourd and

ladies' fingers.

Within a few months, the mustard had grown knee-high and with so much demand in his own village, he didn't have to travel uphill through the snow to Simkot to sell three winter harvests. From February to April this year he earned Rs 25,000 just selling cauliflower, zucchini, cabbage, tomatoes, potatoes, asparagus and cucumber.

"With this extra money I bought stationary and clothes for my children and there was enough to eat and sell last winter," Kal Bahadur told us. "This greenhouse is like a cash cow." Indeed, this resourceful farmer represents HumLa's green revolution, rising from subsistence to being the district's richest farmer.

It hasn't always been easy, the winter blizzards sometimes blow down the green houses, and lack of knowhow means

farmers sometimes make expensive mistakes.

"Because of its isolation, farming practices in Humla are a bit different from the rest of Nepal," says Yogi Kayastha, programme coordinator at Humla Development Institute, a Norwegian-supported group that is helping farmers here by distributing seeds and teaching them new agricultural methods. "For example, they don't make mounds while planting potatoes, which would increase yield. We try to show them by comparing their ways and ours, and when they see the results they accept it."

When Kayastha first came to Humla five years ago and tried to promote the benefits of eating vegetables, local villagers avoided it in the belief that they would fall sick if they ate greens. It changed with awareness and education,

but what really encouraged farmers was when they found out they could make money selling vegetables.

Humla is one of two remaining districts in Nepal without road access, everything has to be flown in by air. Tomatoes that cost Rs 20 per kg in Nepalganj cost Rs 200 here. Which means that the poorest people in the most deprived part of Nepal end up spending most of their income on food at the cost of health and education.

Neglect and corruption has kept Humla isolated and poor. A road link to Kalikot to the south-east, or to Tibet to the north would break the district's debilitating isolation. And although every annual budget sets aside money for a road to Humla, the promise of access has become a cruel joke for its people.

Jeevan Shahi, former elected DDC chairman of Humla, worked hard to link



ALL PICS: SUNIR PANDEY



Humla to Hilsa on the Chinese border, but the conflict interrupted the work. He has also tried to cut the dependence of his district on subsidised rice initially flown in for civil servants.

He says: “If we get help to farm vegetables and grain in the lower valleys, fruits and nuts in the areas around Simkot, and develop livestock in the upper regions, Humla would not be poor and hungry anymore.”

Kal Bahadur Singh is a living example that it is possible. 🇳🇵



THARIK LAMA

HUMLA

GREENHOUSE

5.5m x 1.2m x 1.5m	
COST OF	
STONES	21000
WOOD	14000
PLASTIC COST	11000
LABOUR CHARGE	20000
FITTING MATERIALS	5000
TOTAL: 71000	
INCOME PER WINTER =	RS 25,000

📍 KATHMANDU

	HUMLA	NEPAL (AVERAGE)
AREA	5,565km²	147,181 km²
POPULATION	50,858	2,64,94,504
PER CAPITA INCOME	\$178	\$377
LITERACY RATE	22.8%	60%
CHILD MORTALITY RATE	300/1,000	48/1,000
CHILD MALNUTRITION	65%	29%
LIFE EXPECTANCY	54	69



SAMJHAUNE BUDHA, 43

Samjhaune Budha of Chari took Rs 5,000 of her savings from selling vegetables to Simkot a few years ago and put it in a bank. Every year, whatever her earnings, she continued to add to her savings. There were enough vegetables in her greenhouse to feed her family and she sold the surplus.

She says: “In the last five years, we have changed our food habits and have realised that eating vegetables is good for health.” Now, Budha wants to install a water supply system in her village so children don’t get stomach infections.



TIRSANA SHAHI, 40

With five sons, two daughters-in-law, one daughter, and a loitering husband to feed, 40-year-old Tirsana Shahi had trouble earning enough from her lodge in Dharapori. During the off-season, she couldn’t find enough food to feed her customers, and vegetables that came from Simkot were too expensive.

But after she built a greenhouse in her garden last year, Tirsana has been able to not just diversify her menu but also sell the surplus vegetables to locals. Now, traders and trekkers travelling from Simkot to Hilsa and back, eat and stay over at her lodge. “I spent Rs 35,000 to build this greenhouse,” says Shahi. “It has paid for itself and paid for my children’s food and education.”



DHANE PARIYAR, 67

Dhane Pariyar of Syanda has an infectious laugh that makes his neighbours envious. In his youth he had to make a living by stitching clothes and playing music at weddings. With a growing family this was not enough, so he thought of farming apples to augment his income.

“Last year I sold Rs 70,000 worth of apples,” says Pariyar. “In the last 14 years, I’ve done quite well so I’ve changed my profession from tailor to farmer.”

With money and ideas he got while working in Himachal Pradesh in India, he understood the importance of education and sent his children to school. They have done well, and they take care of him now.

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Rising from the asses



off both his tentacles from a distance of 50 ft. But, like in all sports, there are some simple precautions that need to be taken so no one gets hurt, therefore all cricketers who value their crown jewels wear body armour to prevent themselves from being inadvertently castrated by a Mach 3 beamer.

The Ass found it hard to keep awake while clocking an average of 12 hours a day watching the aptly-named Asses Series on Sports Ten recently. Cricket is a game that you can watch in your sleep. But as the live coverage of the series progressed, the donkey’s uncolonised mind couldn’t make head or tail of the game. Hope is at hand, however, since some of the intricacies of the game have rubbed off even on the Ass and made me somewhat of a pro, if I may say so myself. Now, finally, I can explain the game to our valued customers.

Cricket just looks complicated, actually it is a very simple game. All you need to do is throw a ball at about 550 mph at a guy holding a bat and try to knock

Ever since cricket was invented by Genghis Khan, people have tried to make the game a little more exciting. Once, an entire stadium was knocked unconscious by an exceptionally boring Australia vs England match, so in India they came up with the idea of the IPL T20 to add a little more zing to the game. They even brought in Uzbek cheerleaders wearing just knickers. But the game is still slow and dull, so the Ass feels it is its duty to come up with some tips on how to inject some excitement into cricket:

- Redefine ‘Break leg’ to actually mean breaking legs of batters and fielders and (sometimes) umpires.
- Live tv cameras so far zoom in only on wives, mistresses and GFs of

- players in the spectator stand. Allow them into the batting lineup to liven up the game.
- So no one has unfair advantage, outlaw leg pads, helmets, groin guards and the Pepsimobile.
- Get the Chinese hooked to cricket so we can have real Chinamen.
- Replace leather balls with steel ones with titanium coating and booster rockets.
- Aside from four and six, add eight runs to boundary scores if ball passes over the stands to the stadium parking lot without bouncing
- Replace grass on pitch with slippery wet surface so players can make spectacular slides at silly point
- Allow unisex teams
- Rain or hailstorms never stop play

Asia is divided into two types of countries: those that play cricket and those that eat them. The Line of Control between these two eco-biological domains passes along 118 degrees East meridian in the vicinity of the Andaman Sea. There is also a third type of country in Asia, which is the one that likes to play with crickets by tying pieces of string on their hind legs, and gambling on cricket races. But in general, it would be safe to say that west of the Abdomen Sea, cricket is a sport, and to the east, it is a meal. Many people think cricket is the most boring sport on earth. They’re wrong.


It is the most boring sport in the known universe.


We in Nepal have to thank our lucky stars our country was never colonised by leg breakers, and therefore did not inherit a sport with a scoreboard that looks like the results of a general election. In fact, it is matter of national pride and a symbol of our national sovereignty and territorial integrity that that we do not play cricket, and we must doubly redouble our efforts to uphold this glorious tradition so that we can continue to claim that we were never under a colonial-imperialist yoke. We will fight tooth-and-nail to foil the grand design of the foreign hand that tries to force us to play cricket.

But we have, over the years, paid a heavy price for our independence. We will never, for instance, know the pleasures of hanging out with the Third Empire in our jodhpurs on the gymkhana veranda, sipping ginger beer to applaud the home side juggernaut, and running in our cummerbunds to our dak bungalows when rain stops play so that we can dip our biscuits in the tea. Fair Play and a Level Playing Field are the hallmarks of cricket, which is why the game is so alien to our value system. We will allow cricket on one condition: if match-fixing is legalised.



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