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Modifiable relations

For a country with which Nepal is so close and has such overwhelming economic dependence, what is really surprising is that this is the first official visit by an Indian prime minister in 17 years. It is even more ludicrous that Nepal hasn't had an ambassador in New Delhi for three years, or that our national airline doesn't fly to any point in India. And the Indo-Nepal foreign minister level Joint Commission only had its first meeting since 1991 this week. The priority Nepal is giving Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit is long overdue.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

EDITORIAL

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PARADIGM SHIFT DEADLINE

BY DAMAKANT JAYSHI

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But the government has not done its homework, and our expectations from the visit may be unrealistically high. Nepal and India are perfectly matched for power sharing. When energy demand is high in India Nepal can have surplus power. If the tariffs and are right, Nepal can prosper from power and water sharing. It is also in India's interest that the trade is fair.

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RAIN OR SHINE, POKHARA

Eco-tourism as if the planet mattered, Couchsurfing and how to find great deals online.

PAGE 10-11



A GENERAL'S LABYRINTH

Former army chief Rookmangud Katawal tells all in soon to be released memoir.

PAGE 19

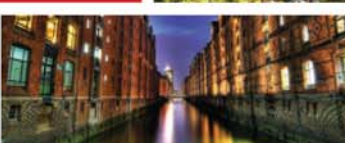
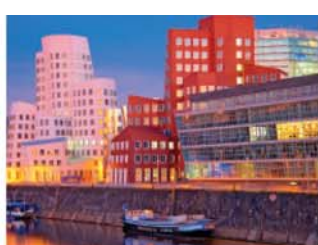
nepalitimes.com

Full profile and excerpt on Kunda Dixit's blog, East-West.

Two steps back

The right to equality of gender and other minorities is under threat from a regressive state.

PAGE 16-17



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SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Given Nepal's obsession with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, cynics say, one would think it is God who is descending from heaven next week. The anticipation and fixation with the visit, however, is understandable.

For a country with which Nepal is so close and has such overwhelming economic dependence, what is really surprising is that this is the first official visit by an Indian prime minister in 17 years. It is even more ludicrous that Nepal hasn't had an ambassador in New Delhi for three years, or that our national airline doesn't fly to any point in India. And, guess what: the Indo-Nepal foreign minister level Joint Commission had its first meeting since 1991 this week.

The priority the government is giving the Modi visit is therefore normal and long overdue. But we worry that Nepal has not done its homework, and our expectations from the visit may be unrealistic. By going overboard to portray Modi as someone with a soft spot for Nepal, we may be implying that we need a foreign leader to set things right in our own country.

Nevertheless, the man from Gujarat could pick up where Gurjal left off in 1997 with a good neighbor policy. The mutual disinterest in maintaining political relations since then has left India's policy towards Nepal in the hands of bureaucrats and spooks for too long. They, in turn, worked with shady locals with too much power and too little accountability. It reached the point where recent exposés of the supposedly secret activities of Indian intelligence in Nepal's politics hardly raised eyebrows in Nepal, and caused little discomfort in New Delhi.

This is where we think the Modi visit holds the promise of a course correction that can benefit both countries. Here is a chance for the top political leadership in India and



It is not in India's strategic interest to make Nepal poorer through unfair deals.

Nepal to start on a clean slate with a forward looking policy of mutual trust to build co-prosperity.

In Nepal, it has to start with a less mendicant mentality and a more strategic outlook. Our relationship has to be based on partnership, not charity. But when leaders of the three top parties finally met five days before Modi's arrival to work out a negotiating strategy, all they could think of was to ask Modiji to gift us Arun III. When will it finally dawn on our leaders that a summit-level meeting is just a photo-op to ink deals worked out months beforehand?

However, much as the Indian side would like to downplay it, the real issue is about water sharing, not electricity. Hydro energy is a by-product, which we happen to desperately need at the moment. But the two key elements that we should have been focusing on even before talking about a power trade agreement are: premium tariffs for peak power, and a formula to calculate downstream benefit sharing from large reservoir projects in Nepal.

Storing monsoon runoff for flood control and off-season augmentation of the flow of the Ganga's Nepali tributaries is going to be critical in coming years, even if India doesn't press ahead with its mammoth inter-basin river-linking project. The Modi visit would be a good opportunity to revive the Pancheswor storage scheme on the Mahakali, first agreed on 20 years ago and stalled because governments fell and parties split over it in Nepal. We had reason to be aggrieved because of the treaty's asymmetry, but much water has flowed down the Mahakali since then. The climate is now conducive for talks on sharing costs, power and irrigation benefits more fairly.

India will once more be tempted to press home its advantage and squeeze every last drop from the Nepali side, and it will be easy to do that because our negotiators are usually not fully prepared. However, it would not be in India's strategic interest to make Nepal poorer and more unstable through an unequal deal which can feed latent anti-India sentiments here.

Nepal and India are perfectly matched for water and power sharing. When energy demand is high in India is when Nepal can have surplus power and vice-versa. If the tariffs are right, Nepal can prosper from power and water sharing. It is also in India's interest that the trade is fair.

YOUR SAY

INDIA-NEPAL

Thank you NT for an insightful editorial (India –open, #717). I think if we utilised this opportunity, keeping in mind our energy and economic priority rather than the outdated, ridiculous and laughable overtly jingoistic nationalism, we can see some real changes in the daily lives of the majority of people. If we miss this chance, then only god can help with another generation selling their bodies and sometimes lives in search of cheap labour in god awful places around the world.

Krishna S

■ As long as Nepali politicians remain corrupt and IQ-challenged, and Indian establishment remains a bully, you can't expect Modi to set things right just because he is a Hindu reactionary.

Dev

■ A rising tide floats all boats equally, but Nepal needs also to invest in its own future development.

David Seddon

■ A sharp and balanced editorial. India must finally understand that bullying does not work, and in fact alienates the very people it needs to sanction future cooperation. Nepalese people will never forget how India arm twisted us on Kosi, Gandak and the Blockade. Getting RAW to install a puppet government as is happening now also doesn't work because the people will overthrow it. Time for some public diplomacy, India. Modi

is popular here, so that could be a place to start.

Bahadur

■ Good article. Nepal must understand, social change is only possible after economic change. There is no point in blaming India for our problems if we cannot even value and use our own resources.

Sam

■ Can't talk about Modi but 'mature Nepali politician' are not words to use in one sentence. The best strategy for Nepal is to be pragmatic Use the threat of going to China to pressure India and vice versa.

Wandering Eric

YARSAGUMBMA
One could apply this same generic formula for developing yarsagumba to many industries:

1. Training on picking.
2. Ensuring no over-picking
3. Ensuring safety of the picked material.
4. Ensuring quality of the picked material.
5. Dispute resolution mechanisms.

Namah

■ Yes, Yarsa could be extinct in coming future so unsustainable harvesting should be banned, and there should be a balance.

Rohan Rai

PROMISES TO KEEP

In Promises to keep, #717, Anurag Acharya writes: 'In a political landscape dominated by conservative male Bahuns, one cannot expect the leaders to be thrilled at the

idea of sharing state power with the hitherto marginalised.' Politicians have no caste, no religion and no ethics. So, stop stereotyping us. Also, I hear people say that Bahuns are corrupt, but I see traffic police from all ethnicities and castes asking money from me. You are doing this nation a great disservice by dividing us. People should be punished individually for their crimes, but you go around generalising and condemning particular castes and ethnicities. No leaders (whatever their caste) will work in the interest of the people because that would be going against their own group. Stop trying to spew hatred.

B

BLACK AND WHITE

Unfortunately, the photo that won Jan Møller Hansen an award (Societies in black and white, by Kunda Dixit, #716) is probably one he should not have taken or published. A powerful image, no doubt, but without consent this is mere voyeurism.

Nepalikukur

■ I want to ask the photographer as well as the reviewer what is their



JAN MØLLER HANSEN

message via capturing and publishing this photo. Is it ethical to capture

people in their moment of grief without their permission? For once try putting yourself in the shoes of the lamenting mother.

Bandana Shah

■ This is a beautiful capture but if I was that mother, I wouldn't have been happy at all. In fact, I would have been very angry.

Genisha Chhantel-Kaucha

■ I am not sure about the ethics of this photo. I would be enraged if this was a picture of my family, and I did not give the photographer permission.

Erin Lynn

■ The picture of the grieving mother hits you in the gut all right, but what right does anyone have to amplify someone's grief through in the public domain? Hansen's ethical judgment on this particular photo is doubtful.

D Rai

ASS

Don't under-estimate the Turd World when it comes to innovation (Life in the Turd World, Backside #717). Now, you don't have to pay to use the toilet in Nepal, the toilet manager pays you to pee or crap. The reason is we have found value in the fertiliser property of human waste. No one wants to talk about it but building a roadside toilet is actually a good investment for local farmers.

Defecator

■ Wildly, disgustingly funny Ass column.

Jurt

Times WHAT'S TRENDING



BIKRAM RAI

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Ketis on K2 by Ayesha Shakya

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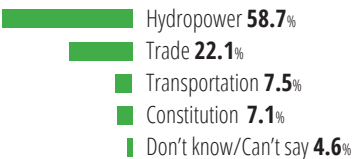
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Nepali steps in Norway by Marit Bakke



nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #718

Q. What should Nepal's priority be in bilateral cooperation with India?

Total votes: 281



Weekly Internet Poll #719
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Does Modi's visit of Nepal indicate a new era in Nepal-India relations?



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SONIA AWALE

TOXIC TARKARI

Despite awareness and crackdown, pesticide-laced vegetables continue to poison

SONIA AWALE

Suddenly the danger of pesticides is all over the mainstream media, and the Nepali public has a new awareness about poisonous vegetables. While urban consumers are faced with uncertainty about what is safe to eat, farmers have been affected by falling demand for produce. The Ministry of Agriculture blacklisted vegetables from

districts in the Tarai and areas surrounding Kathmandu this month after tests found unsafe levels of pesticide residue. But it hasn't been able to stop their sale and buyers have been left with no alternative. Under the personal initiative of Chief Secretary Lilamani Poudel, the government set up a Rapid Pesticide Residue Analysis Laboratory at the Kalimati market, and found 15 per cent of the produce analysed had pesticide levels unfit for human

consumption. In fact, a recent survey showed the most-used pesticides in Nepal are on the banned list. Pramod Koirala of the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control says there is no option but to plug the legal loopholes that permit continued sale of banned agro-chemicals and tainted vegetables. The Kalimati lab found 15 per cent of all vegetables recently tested to be contaminated. Some of the potatoes, tomatoes,

capsicum and salads have pesticide residue up to three times higher than levels deemed safe by the WHO. Nepal's per capita pesticide consumption is one of the lowest in the world, and most subsistence farmers in rural Nepal don't use pesticides. But commercial farmers supplying produce to city markets often overdose their crop and do not comply with the waiting period

FOLLOW UP

Lethal veggies, #709

requirements before harvesting. The result is that consumers are not safe, and farmers are now faced with falling prices as demand drops, a survey of markets in Patan and Kalimati this week showed. Dinesh Babu Tiwari, a Senior Plant Protection Officer at the lab, says there are two types of farmers: "Those who aren't aware about pesticides and those who use pesticides knowingly. The second type must be punished."

Farmers in Tikathali of Lalitpur district argue they have to use pesticides for commercial farming as an insurance against crop failure. Ratna Prajapati, 35, says the negative publicity in the media about pesticides has scared off consumers. "There has been a big drop in sales," he told us, gesturing at his okra field ripe for picking, "we are now using milder pesticides." Saraswati Basnet, 52, also grows vegetables commercially and says one testing lab will not curb pesticide misuse. "You may stop it in Kalimati, but

there are many smaller markets where vegetables with pesticides can be sold," she said. Organic farmer Sojan Karmacharya, however, hasn't suffered a drop in sales. "Eighty per cent of crops in Nepal are still chemical free," he says, "and in the city there are markets for organic produce, so consumers have a choice if the government is serious about it."

Meanwhile, early on Monday morning at Kalimati, the wholesalers were doing brisk business despite the drop in demand. "They don't want insects, they don't want pesticides, what do they want?" asked one angry shopkeeper. "They should be punishing the farmers, not us. Everything has pesticides, it is just a matter of more or less."

The lab technicians told the shopkeepers to dispose of the vegetables that failed the lab test, but they seldom stay behind to check. A scuffle broke out this week between officials and vendors after the government tried to destroy tainted vegetables in Kalimati.

Over at the vegetable market at Mangalbazar, shoppers seemed resigned to their fate. "I know I shouldn't be buying these cucumbers, but what else will I eat," asked Gita Gangol, a college teacher, "but just to be safe, I am starting my own kitchen garden."

Twenty-two-year-old Srijana Regmi says she hasn't stopped buying greens. "I have to eat after all," she shrugs. "We can't tell if these have pesticides or not, so how do I decide? Even if the government says something is pesticide free, I won't believe them." 🇳🇵

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stand to win one Bajaj Pulsar 200 NS, two Samsung Galaxy Grand New mobile phone, and three Being Human gift vouchers worth Rs 5,000 based on the number of tickets they sell. The winners will be announced in October 2014.

Winning performance

Standard Chartered Bank, Nepal was declared winner of the 'Global Finance - World's Best Consumer Internet Bank Awards 2014 for Nepal' in Asia Pacific category on 24 July in New York. A world-class panel of judges at Infosys evaluated all entries, who were finally selected by the editors of Global Finance. In March 2014, the bank was awarded 'The Global Finance World's Best Banks 2014 Awards for Nepal' in emerging markets category by the same magazine. Says CEO Joseph Silvanus: "We are proud to win two awards from Global Finance in the same year. This award proves our commitment towards enhanced customer experience through digital banking."



evaluated all entries, who were finally selected by the editors of Global Finance. In March 2014, the bank was awarded

Easy remit

NMB Bank Sulav Remit have signed a pact with Joyalukkas Exchange Co., Kuwait, for acquiring in-bound remittance from the state of Kuwait. Now Nepali migrant workers in Kuwait can use the bank's services to send money back home. The Joyalukkas Exchange is a part of Joyalukkas Group, a multi-billion dollar global conglomerate and a world renowned brand in Jewellery retail. NMB Bank will soon be starting remittance service from other Middle East Countries as well. Presently, the bank provides similar services under Sulav Remit from UAE, South Korea and Malaysia, and has over 2,000 payout locations across Nepal.


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TUFAN NEUPANE
in NEPALGANJ

On 14 February, 2001, Ram Ratan Chaudhari was resting outside his house in Fatehpur village of Banke district when a group of Maoists jumped him, held a gun to his head and took him away. His family members were locked inside, nobody could come to his rescue.

Chaudhari was then taken to a spot 200 metres away. His hands were tied behind his back, he kicked to the ground and beaten black and blue. When he asked for water, the torture got worse. With a wooden plank placed beneath his feet, a heavy log was dropped on his legs crushing the bones. Chaudhari fell unconscious, and was given up for dead. When he came to his senses, the Maoists were gone.

“It took four hours for help to arrive,” Chaudhari, who was then a technical assistant, recalls. His family carried him to Agaiya in Rapti from where he was taken by ambulance to Bheri Zonal Hospital in Nepalganj. He got a blood transfusion, but the hospital couldn’t treat him so he was brought to Kathmandu, a 12 hour bus journey away. Once in Kathmandu, Chaudhari heard that the Maoists had come looking for him at the hospital in Nepalganj.

A few days before his abduction, Ram



Ratan had received a letter from the Maoists asking for a ‘donation’ to the party. Like many others he didn’t want any trouble so he readied an envelope with the money and waited for it to be collected. But nobody showed up. It was only much later that Ram Ratan found out he had been nearly beaten to death for failing to pay the extortionists on time.

Chaudhari spent almost six months at Kathmandu’s Teaching Hospital. He was only able to sleep face up, and couldn’t turn,

“Everyone forgot us”

The revolution that was supposed to liberate his community from oppression devoured Ram Ratan Chaudhari’s family

stand or sit. Upon hearing about her son’s critical condition, Ram Ratan’s mother was so stressed and depressed that she died two months later. Ram Ratan was still too sick in hospital to perform her last rites.

On the 13th day of his mother’s death, the Maoists attacked his village house, took off with most of the family’s belongings and captured his farm. His ailing father Heeramani and brother-in-law Khushi Ram were severely beaten. Fearing repercussions, none of the villagers helped the injured.

It was only two days later that the APF sent a truck to take the injured to the same hospital in Nepalganj where Ram Ratan had been taken a few months previously. The attack on his son, the death of his wife, the looting of his house and property and his own injuries was so traumatic that Ram Ratan’s father passed away soon after.

After he was able to move about, albeit painfully, Ram Ratan returned to Nepalganj since there was nothing to return to in his village. He finally went back in 2007, and built a small house, but he never got his captured land back. It is now occupied by



Jit Bahadur Tharu, Bhim Bahadur Tharu, Bharthari Tharu and Rati Ram Ujuri, who are all affiliated to Mohan Baidya’s CPN-M party.

During the conflict, Jit Bahadur Tharu was a Maoist leader and walked around the villages surrounded by bodyguards, and adjudicated in revolutionary people’s courts. Today, he owns Ram Ratan’s seven bighas of land.

Ram Ratan still has yet to receive the compensation conflict victims are entitled to, and there has been no support from the government for his hospital expenses. “The Maoist government only provided relief and compensation packages to their own supporters, not for people like us who suffered under them,” he says.

Ram Ratan is still unable to walk properly. He says: “The Maoists destroyed my family and future. Everyone has forgotten us.”

nepalitimes.com

- “They should have just killed me”, #537
- The conflict’s first victim, #650

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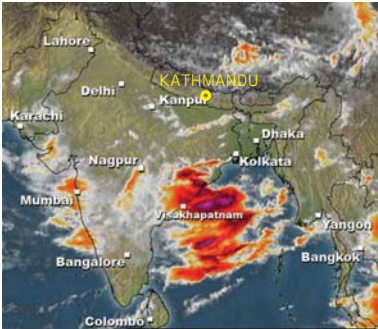
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PICS: K2 EXPEDITION 2014

AYESHA SHAKYA

Three Nepali women climbers on 26 July became the first all-women team to climb K2, which at 8,611m is the second highest mountain in the world. Maya Sherpa, Dawa Yangzum Sherpa and Pasang Lhamu Sherpa are part of the K2 Women Climbing for Climate Change Expedition and summited a peak that is regarded as much more difficult than Mt Everest. The mountain, which is on the Pakistan-China border has killed one in every four people trying to climb it. Of the 86 who have died on the mountain in the past 80 years, six are Nepalis.

“We are finally at the base camp after successfully summiting K2. We are grateful to everybody who supported this project, especially our family members for being with us every step of the way,” wrote Pasang Lhamu on the K2 expedition website. The team returns to Kathmandu in mid-August. The expedition was designed to raise international awareness about the impact of climate change on the Himalaya and was supported by the Himalayan Women Welfare Society, Kathmandu-based ICIMOD, Sherpa Adventure Gear, Nepal Mountaineering Association, Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal and Cho-Oyu Expeditions among others. “Although there were quite a few sponsors for this expedition, there was no support from the Nepali government,” said Pasang Tamang a staffer with the K2 project, “perhaps with this success there might be some sort of



MAYA SHERPA is the team leader of the K2 expedition and has climbed Mt Everest twice from the north and south, and is the first Nepali woman to climb many Himalayan peaks, including Lhotse and Cho Oyu.



PASANG LHAMU SHERPA has 13 years of experience in mountaineering and was the first Nepali woman to climb Nangpai Gosum (7,321m) and is also the first Nepali female mountaineering instructor.



DAWA YANGZUM SHERPA is from Beding in Rolwaling, has climbed Mt Everest and has won medals in several Himalayan long-distance runs.

support from them.” This year marks the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of K2 by an Italian expedition led by Ardito Desio on 31 July, 1954. Nearly 350 people have climbed the mountain, and only seven of them were women till the Nepalis brought that total to 10. Of the 7 women who have climbed K2, 4 of them died on the mountain

and 1 of them died subsequently while climbing Kanchenjunga. Some 84 have been killed on the mountain, and K2 is second only to Annapurna I in the fatality rate among Himalayan peaks. Two Nepali guides, Chhiring Dorje Sherpa and Pasang Lama were involved in a dramatic rescue on K2 and are the subject of the book, Buried in the Sky by Peter

Zuckerman and Amanda Pandoan about the death in 2008 of 11 climbers on the mountain. Following their successful ascent of K2, the team is planning to climb Mt Kanchenjunga, the world’s third highest mountain. nepalitimes.com ■ All eyes on K2 #709 ■ Himalayan spring, #495

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EVENTS



Charya Nritya,
Experience Kathmandu's version of dance meditation under the tutelage of Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and immerse yourself in nature, consciousness and compassion. *Rs 1,600, 1 to 14 September, 12.15pm, inneradventuretravel.com*

BFF,
Adopt a dog from Animal Nepal's shelter – the local mixed breeds are healthier and better adjusted to local conditions than pedigrees. *Rs 150, animalnepal.org, (01)5538068, 9841334537*



Headspin,
Take part in the ultimate B-boying competition in Nepal and compete with dancers from New Delhi and Mumbai to win Rs 25,000 in cash prizes. *Rs 250, 10 August, St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel*

Muna Madan,
Nepal's favourite epic on stage again. *Rs 100/200/300/500, runs till 31 July, Rastriya Nachghar, Jamal*

Impression,
An exhibition of the works of photographer Aakash Pradhan. *10am to 5pm, Café Mitini, Lajimpat, (01)4002070*

Untied Women,
Come hear from fair trade producer Manushi on their work empowering women's lives through tie dye production. *1 to 14 August, Café & Shop Mitini, Lajimpat*



Flagbearers,
Be one of 30,000 participants to form the largest human national flag and make it to the Guinness Book of World Records. *9 August, 6 to 9am, Tundikhel, Kathmandu*

Newa film festival,
support local filmmakers, skip the mall, and come enjoy an open-air film screening every evening for a week. *6 to 12 September, Janabahal, Kel Tol, Kathmandu*

Fleeting world,
an exhibition of installation art, film, and drawing by Tiffany Singh. *4 to 12 August, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited*



Cleaning Changu,
Calling for volunteers to help clean up one of Kathmandu's oldest temples. *2 August, 10am onwards*

Frame of mind
A 20-day workshop on filmmaking where amateurs will be taught 6 days of theory followed by 20 days of shooting, with emphasis on planning, writing, and producing short films. 50 per cent discount for female filmmakers. *Rs 3,000, 5 to 25 August, 11am to 4pm, onionfilms.blogspot.com, 9851014894, 9848835015*



Gai Jatra,
commemorating those who passed away in the last year, and also Nepal's annual LGBT pride march. *11 August*

DINING

Darbar Restaurant and Bar,
new outlet specialising in delicious Japanese food and drinks, and also Continental and Nepali staples; spacious parking and a lush green garden. *7am to 9pm, Hotel Kaze Darbar, Kamalpokhari, (01)4420737*

Vootoo,
the new home of Newari cuisine, as well as a continental menu for those who don't want an adventure. *Lajimpat, (01)4005222*

Natsul,
a Korean restaurant for all things barbeque, from succulent pork to crunchy vegetables; you can have delicacies cooked right at your own table or partake of the dedicated barbeque pit. *Lakeside, (061)229198*



Dragon Chinese Restaurant,
try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

Maya Devi Village Restaurant,
enjoy a BLT sandwich breakfast with fresh fruit, muesli and curd in the lap of a Phewa Tal sunrise, and visit the magnificent cultures in their enclosures. *Pokhara, 9806647917, mayadevillage.com*



Haus Café,
pastas, pizzas, desserts, Haus does everything with equal perfection. *Pulchok*

Phat Kath,
offers French-ish food, a takeaway creperie, low tables and hookahs for hippies, tables and chairs for others, and a formidable hip hop soundtrack for everyone. *Thamel*

Chongqing Fast Food,
gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. *Thamel*

Ghar-e-kabab,
serving the best of north Indian cuisine, with live Sarod recitals on some days. *Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg*



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

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MUSIC

**Bongo fury**

Master Colombian multi-instrumentalist Carlos Balanta, aka Baterimba, will be collaborating with Nepali percussionist Miles Tundekar for an energetic show not to be missed. 1 August, 5.30 to 8.30pm, Soaltee Crowne Plaza

House of Music,

For five days a week, this bar and restaurant is packed with musical events that include open mics, karaoke and jam sessions. Open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 4pm to 11pm, Amrit Marg, Thamel, 9851075172

**Heavy friggin' gig,**

Party with the underbelly of the local music scene, featuring Shannon Scam, Wakk Thuu, 13th Street, Strangle and other wildly agitated rock combos. Rs 100, 1pm onwards, Jamsthan, Talchikhel, Lalitpur

Fusion Night,

Ninad with his fusion sound, 7pm onwards, 25 July, Places Restaurant & Bar, Thamel

In the mood

Party with DJ Pritis, Channel V India's official DJ, and a host of other disc spinners from Nepal. Rs 1,500 incl. one drink and dinner, 1 August, 6pm onwards, Moods Studio Lounge, Blue Bird Mall, Tripureswor, (01)4215740/20

Trance'n'dance

Eleven hours of nonstop trance music, with DJs from far and wide. 9 August, 1pm onwards, 1905, Kantipath, 9808263228, 9843402821

**Lipan conjuring**

Local musicians Kamero will be performing a tribute show to legendary prog-rockers Tool. Rs 300/500, 23 August, 3pm onwards, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9843664132

GETAWAYS

**The Last Resort,**

test your limits with canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking and bungee jumping. Bhatekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247

Barahi Jungle Lodge,

the first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park. Spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool. Andrauli, West Chitwan, barahijunglelodge.com

Waterfront Resort,

head to this eco-friendly resort to make your stay right in front of Phewa Lake. Sedi Height, Pokhara, (61)466 303/304, 9801166311, sales@waterfronthotelnepal.com

Neydo Monastery,

a monastery and guest house, Neydo is home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room. Pharping, Kathmandu www.neydohotel.com/contact/html

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Alice Restaurant
Gairidhara, Kathmandu
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Mob: 98049413523
Email: alicegairidhara@gmail.com

Alice is a quintessential family restaurant because of the fact that one can spend quality time in a peaceful environment and well facilitated dining destination. Secluded from the hustle and bustle of busy streets, the location was cautiously thought of considering the fact that the restaurant was set up not too long ago.

A journey to embark, together

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Rain or shine, Pokhara is fine



CLARE HENNIG
in POKHARA

Pokhara is one of the most scenic places in the world. Chinese guidebooks list it among the ten top places to see before you die.

Yet, the valley nestled in the lap of the Annapurnas and dotted with lakes gets bad press in the rainy season. It records nearly 3,000mm of rain a year, double what Kathmandu gets, and tourists are told to avoid it in the monsoon.

True, clouds hide the snow-covered peaks, flights can be erratic, and it is the off season for paragliding and trekking. But the monsoon downpours in Pokhara are the stuff of legend, they blend land, lake and sky in one very wet world.

Previously, the contrast between the summer high season and the monsoon low season was stark, remembers Kiran Tuladhar of Atithi Resort, one of Pkhara’s newest hotels. “Before, when the rains started, the tourists stopped,” said Tuladhar. “But Pokhara is now booming even in the monsoon. Lakeside is a happening place.”

Although general consensus holds that Pokhara is better to visit during the autumn, the monsoon has its benefits. The mountains are lush and green, visibility is

perfect, there are waterfalls everywhere, and when the snow-tipped mountains peek out of the clouds in the mornings the views are be spectacular. Pokhara is also cheaper because of the monsoon discounts.

“Like most places, we offer monsoon season prices,” said Madhav Timilsina of Blue Sky Travel and Tours. “For those travelling on a budget, off-season is better. It’s quieter, less people, and there are always discounts.”

For some visitors, particularly those coming from West Asia or hotter parts of India, Pokhara could sell itself as a rainy destination especially after its new international airport is completed in four years and can offer direct flights.

“Nepal can benefit from marketing monsoon tourism in the desert states,” said the representative of a Gulf-based airline in Kathmandu. “However, the problem has been the unreliability of domestic flights in the rainy season.”

For other visitors, however, the rain is merely tolerated. “I knew that it was monsoon season, but I didn’t know what a monsoon was before I arrived,” Kate Middleton, an Australia volunteer, said with a laugh.

Lisa Ashley, an American, expressed concern about the weather preventing her group from going places. Still, she says: “I’d recommend coming anyways – it’s green, everything is blooming , it’s lovely.”

Couchsurfing in Nepal

Imagine opening your door to a stranger, not knowing anything about him or her. Furthermore, this stranger comes from a totally different culture. Yet 7 million travellers all over the world have joined Couchsurfing, a new way to see the world without being a “tourist”.

Surfers stay for free in homes of local members of the worldwide network. Being against all the rules of the market economy, one may ask why people do it? Is it a hippie fad and a reaction to the over-commercialisation of tourism? And what happened with the famous sentence ‘do not trust strangers’?

Yet, with the countless possibilities of online-friendships, the concept of a stranger has also changed. Before joining the Couchsurfers, you need to provide some information about yourself, so it is a bit like Facebook for travellers. But how can you trust that the information people provide is true?



Probably the most important security information is the reference that guests and hosts write about each other. ‘Narayan is one of the very few Nepali guys who I can say with 100% sure that I would trust my life,’ writes Sofia Palma, a 24 year-old from Portugal who stayed with Narayan Paudel (26) in Pokhara.

There are hundreds of Couchsurfing hosts in Pokhara who have no references. Paudel made his profile with the help of a Danish friend, which probably helped him to receive a positive image to start with. But most of all, he seems to impress people by taking them to his village and showing the traditional way of living.

“It is a cultural exchange, a way to get friends from all over the world,” explained Paudel, who has hosted strangers from far and wide. “My dream is to go to Italy one day, but because it is not so easy for us to travel, Couchsurfing thus becomes a way to bring culture into your home.”

Paudel added that he has nothing to lose, but a lot to gain. His biggest fear is not being robbed, but making people comfortable in his modest home.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT COUCHSURFING:

- The average age of Couchsurfers: 28
- 53% men 47% women.
- There are 19,1 million friend-links created on the Couchsurfing website
- There are 44 Couchsurfers living in Antarctica
- The most nights hosted by a single Couchsurfer: 2,593

“Experience the world in a way money can’t buy” is the official motto on the Couchsurfing webpage. The concept is revolutionary, and people disillusioned with the artificial hospitality that you have to buy, seem to be opting for it.

In that sense, Couchsurfing is a good example of globalization, blurring the border between the local and global and removing money from the equation.

Merin Piipuu in Pokhara

Tourism as if the planet mattered

MERILIN PIIPUU
in KASKI

Generally, tourism is not a very eco-friendly enterprise. But one family near Pokhara has converted its organic farm into a tourist destination that gives more than it takes from the fragile environment.

‘Eco-tourism’ has become a buzzword, but here at the Anapurna Eco-Village the Adhikari family has successfully combined organic agriculture and income generation in which the visitor, the village economy and the environment all benefit.

“Eco-tourism means living in harmony with nature as well as with your family and community. It is about helping each other,” says Bishwo Raj Adhikari, 43, eldest of three brothers whose ancestors have farmed these terraced slopes for at least nine generations.



Bishwo and his younger brothers Bednidhi and Purna (*above*) regard their father Shiva Lal Adhikari, who is 71, as their inspiration in environment-friendly farming and tourism. Shiva Lal has taught his sons everything there is to know about agro-forestry, fruits and vegetables. Bednidhi’s wife, Malati leads a village mother’s group, making organic soap and teaching this skill to cooperatives in near-by villages.

The motto of the Adikhari brothers is to “make people happy” and they spread contentment to the tourists who stay at their village as well as to farmers in the neighbourhood of these lush green mountains. With income from visitors, the family has invested in environmental awareness, education and health care in the village.

The Adhikari brothers have used their exposure to the outside world to install a piped water system where water is pumped with solar energy to storage tanks that supply drinking water to the



DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

It is hard to describe exactly why *The Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* is so disturbing. Perhaps it begins with the very premise: humans experiment on apes, apes become as intelligent as humans, both parties treat each other and themselves shamefully. If this sounds unbearably painful to you, then don't bother going to

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

watch the film, you'll find yourself properly traumatised, particularly because this sequel to the 2011 *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* is so technologically sophisticated that all of the ape characters are jarringly, viscerally humanised, beating home the message that what we think of as "humanity" is really just the ability to reason, think, and, now as we pretend to

be fully evolved, feel compassion. For those who need a bit of a catch up: the main character in both films is Caesar (played and voiced by the wonderful Andy Serkis), a highly evolved ape who was lovingly nursed and treated as a family member by a human family in the first film. As *Dawn* starts, human kind has been mostly eradicated by a virus. The only real form of civilisation is the highly sophisticated ape community that has taken over the famed Muir north of San Francisco. The apes live in peace, content that they will never again be mistreated or experimented upon by people (Caesar and his fellow hyper intelligent apes are the result of laboratory testing), but frequently speak of the horror of having lived under humans. Imagine, then, the reaction when two of the apes come across a bellicose human in the forest and are subsequently shot at. Thus begins a horrific war between the apes and humans, both factions of which harbour hawks, doves,

savages, and savants. This film is difficult to watch for the thinking viewer. It drives home, with efficiency, great skill, and feats of technology, the horror of living in a modern world where humans think of themselves as the superior species and the rightful inheritors of the earth even while we simultaneously monger wars, commit genocides, and shoot down civilian planes. Ours is a planet now ridden with industrial waste, a planet where evolved humans still include those of us who gleefully kick dogs, spit on the street, and rape, murder, and pillage. *The Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, even though difficult to stomach, is perhaps necessary viewing. It is a mirror that reflects the ugliest aspects of humanity right back upon us - watching it, therefore, requires quite a bit of bravery. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



SAY CHEESE: Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam takes a photo of UML Chair KP Oli (seated) at Kathmandu airport on his return from medical treatment in Singapore on Wednesday.



FUNERAL CORTEGE: Singing nun Ani Choying Drolma drives in the procession bearing the body of Kunsig Shamar Rinpoche as it went from Kathmandu airport to a monastery in Raniban where his last rites will be performed. The government finally allowed the body to be brought to Nepal after much dithering.



HUGE STINK: Holy men walk past garbage piled up on the street on Tuesday. Garbage collection in Kathmandu Valley has ground to a halt because the dirt road to the only landfill site at Okharpauwa is damaged by rains.



FLYING COLOURS: Flight attendants from Dragon Air present gifts to students at the Bal Sarathi Academy in Tilganga on Tuesday.

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If you are flying to Nepalganj or Dhangadhi on Yeti Airlines, you don't need to feel guilty or worry anymore about your carbon footprint or contributing to Nepal's trade deficit. The airline has been setting aside Rs 40 from every roundtrip ticket from Kathmandu to these destinations in western Nepal.

In a span of four years, the Green Project has planted and protected nearly 80 hectares of forest. Last week, members of the local community, Nepal Army and Armed Police Force, joined hands to add another 1000 tree saplings in the area of Uttar Rameshworam in Dhangadi. The project plans to plant 20,000 saplings this year.

"As an airline company, I know that we release a significant amount of carbon emissions into the atmosphere, so the Green Project is our way of giving back to the environment," said Roshan Regmi of Yeti Airlines.




PICS: BASIL EDWARD TEO

The Green Project has so far reforested plots in Kanchanpur, Kailali and Doti districts. The Tarai region has lost nearly 10 per cent of its forest cover in the past two decades.

Bhagwati Hamal, a district secretary at Women for Human Rights, was initially skeptical of the project when she first participated in it five years ago. "When I first helped with planting, I didn't think there would be much change, but now I see greenery all around my home-town," said the

37-year-old.

Building on its success in Dhangadhi, Yeti Airlines initiated another reforestation project in Solukhumbu this year. Said Regmi: "We are committed to reducing the impact of carbon emissions on the environment, and we wish our customers who have flown with us to these sectors also feel good that they have also contributed to the cause." 

Basil Edward Teo

www.yetiairlines.com

Samay by the Lake



they ate, and some of them jumped into the water mid-meal. With the searing summer sun beating down on us, it was difficult to resist the temptation to join them.

We started with a Banana Lassi (Rs 175) after reading on the menu that the bananas come from Samay's own kitchen garden. The well-blended lassi was smooth and thick, and we were delighted to find that they did not skimp on the bananas.

The waiter recommended the Samay Buffalo Wings (Rs 300) - spicy, crispy chicken wings served with a side of yogurt, and we immediately got down to dirtying our hands. The wings were generously spiced, and the plain yogurt complemented the spices well, making it the right amount of sweet and spicy needed to perk our tastebuds up for the rest of the meal.

to lie down and take a nap before dessert arrives. This place takes the definition of 'relaxation' to a whole new level.

The tables in the lakeside dining area are only a few steps away from the water. A group nearby was actually fishing while



Our order of Carp (Rs 380) grilled with sautéed vegetables and mashed potatoes soon followed.


Samay boasts that the fish are fresh from Phewa lake itself, and indeed the fish was tender, and went well with the mashed potatoes.

The fillet servings were non bony - a pleasant change from the trouts found back in Kathmandu - and we were able to enjoy the delicate meat without interruption.

The Lemon Chicken (Rs 370), however, fell short of expectations. The grilled chicken breast was barely visible, drowning in a thick yellow gravy, which we assumed to be lemon sauce. However, it turned out to be more mustard than anything else. Nevertheless, it was an interesting dressing for the meat, especially if you are partial to the taste of

mustard.

Strangely, all our servings were served in portions of three - which happened to be the number of guests at the table - but it may be useful to ask about size of portions before ordering.

Samay also has a bar, and we couldn't help reflecting how perfect the place must be in the evening with the sun setting over the lake. We all raised a toast with our lassi glasses and agreed it would be worth coming back. 

Louise Evangeline Ng

How to get there: Samay is located at the west end of Phewa lake, along the way to Pame. After entering Khapaundi, it's the first restaurant on your left.

We found ourselves in the middle of Pokhara on a hot day, not wanting to do any touristic activities but desperate to have a cool sit down and relaxing meal out of the sun. So we made our way to Samay By The Lake, a small restaurant with a beautiful location right next to Pokhara's languid, lagoon-like Phewa Lake.

Samay is primarily an outdoor restaurant, featuring a cosy and sheltered sit down area, with low tables and big cushions on the floor where you can stretch your legs out and lounge around. This is the kind of place where no one would bat an eyelid if you decided

Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a 



The Amarnath Yatra

Almost all high altitude pilgrimages are characterised by very rapid ascents by large congregations leading to high rates of acute mountain sickness (AMS). In addition there may be tremendous overcrowding on the trail that is not seen in the usual non-pilgrim trekking trails in the Nepal Himalaya.

The Amarnath Yatra in Kashmir is among the more dangerous high altitude pilgrimages in the Indian Himalaya. Situated at about 4,000 m, this Shiva cave annually attracts a phenomenal 600,000 pilgrims.



DR. BHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

This year the Yatra started on 28 June and culminates next week on the full moon night of 10 August. Janai Purnima is also the day when our Gosainkunda Yatra in the Langtang region at 4,300 m ends with a holy dip in the surrounding lake. Both Yatras are in honour of Shiva. At Amarnath on the last day, about a hundred sadhus take a sacred mace to the Shiva shrine.

In 2011 and 2012 the Amarnath Yatra witnessed the death of over 100 pilgrims each year due to altitude sickness, hypothermia, and exacerbations of pre-existing illnesses. In 1996, about 250 pilgrims died, and the dangers are compounded by threats from militants in Kashmir. Last year, there were a lot fewer fatalities.

From Srinagar in Kashmir, pilgrims go to Pahalgam by road transport and then start their 5 to 6 days trek to the cave where the frozen Shiva Lingam is enshrined.



There is another shorter one-day route from Baltal, but this is potentially more dangerous. The Indian government is trying to spread awareness about AMS and other dangers, and the Health Ministry is setting up a committee to effectively train the health care professionals along the trail. Obviously, AMS is an important cause of death and those looking after the pilgrims have to be well versed in this field.

But in addition, many pilgrims are poorly clad for this trek and suffer from the potentially fatal effects of hypothermia (cold temperature). Incredibly many of these partially-hypothermic pilgrims also take holy dips in icy rivers in the region. Ensuring that pilgrims have adequate warm clothing is very important, but many Sadhus may be reluctant to wear warmer clothes.

Unlike trekkers and mountaineers, pilgrims have more pre-existing illnesses (such as uncontrolled diabetes) which may make matters worse when they ascend to high altitude, especially as many also may fast along the way. Some of the important risk factors for AMS in pilgrims are gender and age, hence AMS risk factors derived from many

other high altitude studies may not be generalisable for pilgrims. Female pilgrims may be more at risk for AMS because they may take fasting more seriously than males and thus become very dehydrated. Among non-pilgrims, high altitude epidemiological studies show younger people are less susceptible to AMS. One important explanation may be that older pilgrims are generally less fit and have to exert themselves significantly more than someone who may be fitter. Excessive exertion may lead to AMS.

Studies of Amarnath Yatra pilgrims show that coronary artery disease, complications of diabetes and peptic ulcer disease are some of the common, important reasons for admission to hospitals during the trip.

If you are planning an Amarnath Yatra this season, it may be wise to learn more about the prevention of altitude sickness and hypothermia. In addition, any pre-existing illnesses (diabetes, coronary artery disease) should be well controlled and it helps to be reasonably physically fit before the trip. May you be rewarded with the magnificent scenery and a spiritual high. 🏔️

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Light as air

In 2010, Apple introduced the newest member of the MacBook family, the aptly named MacBook Air. The perfect blend of performance, portability and design had tech-heads around the world drooling over conventional boxy laptops. Behold April 2014, and the latest iteration of the MacBook Air is still the benchmark against which all ultrabooks are compared.

The new MacBook Air keeps the same feel as the previous generations, a look that still rivals the newest laptops in terms of design. As with the previous MacBook Air models, the new version still sports the now all-too-familiar wedged aluminium construction, which feels as sturdy as ever. The MacBook Air is available in 2 screen sizes, but both the 11-inch and 13-inch versions of the MacBook Air have the same thickness, ranging from 0.11-inch to 0.68-inch, and both weigh in under 3 lbs. The backlit keyboard and trackpad are the same as on the previous models. In particular, the trackpad remains the standard by which all others are judged, aided by the brilliant multi-touch and gesture-enabled features. The 11-inch MacBook Air sports a display of 1366 × 768 (135 PPI), while the 13 inch MacBook sports a 1440 × 900 (128 PPI) screen, resulting in the clear, bright and vibrant screen that we have come to expect from Apple.

The MacBook Air runs on Apple's latest OS X 10.9 (Mavericks) operating software, and is powered by a 1.4 GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor (fourth generation), 4 GB of 1600 MHz LPDDR3 SDRAM, and a Intel HD Graphics 5000 card. The Mac OS takes some getting used to, if you have switched from a Windows PC, but after overcoming the initial learning curve, you should be whizzing along in no time. The MacBook Air is more than powerful enough for even the mainstream users amongst us, and Web surfing, social media, HD video playback is extremely smooth and fast.



Storage on the MacBook Air is on the lower side, but that is due to the Solid State Drives (SSD) that Apple has packed in the MacBook Air. Macbook Airs are available only with 128GB or 256GB of internal storage, but one can only realize the power and speed of SSDs if one has actually used it. The legendary battery life of Apple products continues with the Macbook Air, which lasts a whopping 9 hours of intensive use, while a FaceTime HD (720p) camera, Bluetooth 4.0, two USB 3.0 slots, one Thunderbolt port, and one SD card slot (13 inch only) take care of your communication and connectivity needs. 📶

Yantrick's Verdict: A unique blend of power, performance and portability, the MacBook Air is the ultimate on-the-go full laptop, but at a price point that may be out of reach for some. The base model (11 inch, 128 GB) is priced at around the Rs 1 lakh mark, but this is the premium pricing that we have come to expect from Apple for a market-leading premium product.

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One of the objectives of Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Nepal this week was to demonstrate that the new BJP government in New Delhi is charting a new course in bilateral relations as part of her prime minister's stated goal of a neighbours-first policy.



THE DEADLINE

Damakant Jayshi

That is recognition of widespread concern and public discussion in Nepal's public sphere of the growing role of Indian intelligence agencies in 'handling' politicians, business and media in Nepal. The fact that the actions of a supposedly secretive spy agency is debated so openly is detrimental to both sides.

Therefore, Swaraj's promise of dealing with Nepal at the highest level has been a welcome change, and the message went down well in Kathmandu. It has laid the groundwork for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-

day visit beginning August 3, and in the longer term to explore new opportunities to improve ties. The expectations of change and euphoria are palpable.

While it is too early to predict just how long-lasting Modi's initiative will be and how it will be implemented on the ground, it is an opening that Nepalis should grab with both hands. If Nepal wants a gift of a mega-project or India's magnanimity, what should be our reciprocal gesture? What the Swaraj visit has done is to put the onus on Nepal to make the Modi visit a fruitful one.

It is time for Nepal to walk the talk. Politicians, academics, journalists do not tire of mentioning the special relations that exists between the two countries and peoples. But what is more obvious is the acrimony, distrust and planted stories in the media in both countries. There isn't a shortage of journalists on both sides willing to do the dirty job of spinning and planting leaks just to have access to the high and mighty.

The result is that India feels betrayed despite doing so much for its northern neighbour and Nepal lives in chronic suspicion of interference and bullying from the south. But what should really concern Nepal is its ballooning trade deficit with

India.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank's 11-month figures ending mid-May for the last fiscal year, for every rupee of export to India, we import 13 rupees worth. By mid-June our imports from India for 2013-2014 stood at NPR 337 billion. Our petroleum imports from India contribute the most to this deficit and is growing because of the volume of imports as well as prices. So, we continue to sell our USD reserves to buy India currency from India to pay the Indians. One does not have to be an economist to realise what this means.

That is the real challenge before Nepal's policy-makers and leaders: to find a viable solution to the trade deficit. This can't be done by hollow anti-Indian nationalism, or slogans. It needs a viable and strategic policy to boost exports.

So far, Nepal has always sought concessions on trade and exports which India has granted, with a few exceptions. True, the arrangement is not free from occasional hurdles from different bodies in India. More demeaning is the fact that our politicians – from all major political parties without exception – try to cut deals that suit their personal ambitions.

The Indian establishment

MODIFIABLE RELATIONS

The Narendra Modi visit next week affords the opportunity for a paradigm shift in bilateral ties

has obliged because it opens Nepal up to do as it pleases here. We have been paying a heavy price for the absence of formal reciprocity, and short-sightedness of our leaders. Nepal's waters are flowing into India with neither country using its potential benefits.

states bordering Nepal and which may be led by parties other than those ruling in the centre.

The choice for both sides is clear: either continue to be overbearing, do nothing, complain, rabble-rouse, or seize the opportunity. @damakant

Indian intelligence has blatantly transgressed all diplomatic norms in Nepal, and the Indian Embassy distributes aid directly to the districts. The Chinese and the others have not just been following in India's foot-steps, but are now trying to match it.

Instead of requesting Modi for a gift of mega project, why not enter into an agreement that is in the interest of both countries? Asking India to show magnanimity in investments should not be a precondition. No country would agree to a pact that is not in its national interest. For a federal government in New Delhi, there is the added pressure of keeping in mind the interests of the



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Nothing about us, without us

The right to equality of gender and other minorities is under threat from a regressive state

In a true democracy the main mantra to ensure inclusion is ‘nothing about us without us’. But, too often in Nepal, for the marginalised it is always ‘there is nothing for us and it’s always without us’.

From 2009-2012, Nepal’s gender minorities were invited for their inputs into national policy and budget. But since then there hasn’t been a single rupee allocated in the budget to support gender minorities. This year, too, the NC-UML coalition left us out of the Red Book.



COMMENT
Sunil Babu Pant

When taxing citizens the government does not discriminate, but when assuring citizens of their rights, the government wants to know your gender. And if you are third gender, you cannot go to school, you cannot get a passport, you cannot get married, you cannot apply for job, you cannot join

the police/army/bureaucracy, you cannot access a loan or development programs, you cannot open your business or register your property.

There has been a worrying trend of sidelining the needs and rights of Nepal’s LGBT population in the last few years, and the government is regressing from its previous progress through activism and Supreme Court decisions.

The Law Ministry, under the NC’s Narhari Acharya, is trying to enact punitive laws that re-criminalise LGBT relationships, completely overturning previous Supreme Court decisions. After the first Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 2012, there is not a single person from the third gender community in the bureaucracy, ministry, parliament or any other decision-making level.

Department of Immigration
Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal
DEPARTURE INFORMATION
(TO BE FILLED BY FOREIGN NATIONALS)

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Middle Name

Family Name

DDMMYYYY

SEX

Male

Female

Other

Passport Number

Indian nationals to India may provide other authorised ID

Before it passes any laws about us, the government should talk to the minority gender community.

This new draft provision of civil and criminal codes prepared by the Law Ministry not only defines homosexuality, but also oral and anal sex among heterosexuals as ‘unnatural’ acts. The definition of rape is narrowed only to women. The notion that only men can be rapists and only women can be victims comes from a deep-rooted patriarchal mindset. These notions seem to be inspired by conservative reversals in India, some western and African countries.

Many third genders are forced into heterosexual marriage, ruining both lives. Codifying such forced and heterosexualised relationships to third genders serves only to create needless suffering to our families and relatives. The notion that third gender and same-sex relationships are unnatural is absurd and wrong, as proven by our historical and religious texts. The more we exclude and isolate LGBT people, the more we hurt everyone. Because if a person has no right to go to school, no right to get jobs, cannot contribute to the economy of the country, cannot contribute to the culture, they become burden to society.

Nepali law is not only a problem for third genders, but also for women, Dalits, Janajatis, people with disabilities and religious minorities. They all need to be included in decision-making, especially in matters that affect them directly.

All Nepalis who believe in equality and tolerance must raise their voices. The right to justice of all marginalised peoples is under threat from a regressive state. They are going to be excluded, marginalised, discriminated against, criminalised and demonised. 🇳🇵

Sunil Babu Pant is the founder of the Blue Diamond Society and was a UML member of the first Constituent Assembly.

Equality in

A government committee is ready to submit recommendations on legalising same-sex marriage, but it is a long road

BASIL EDWARD TEO

More than three years since the government formed a committee to make recommendations on legislation for same-sex marriage, the team is finally ready to submit its findings to the Prime Minister’s office in a month.

The committee studied legislation in Nordic countries, its potential impact on Nepali society if legalised, and also interviewed stakeholders, but cannot reveal its final recommendations for the proposed legislation.

“We conducted questionnaires for members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community, their parents, law enforcement officers and human rights activists in the past three years,” said committee member Kabiraj Kannah.

The previous attempt to pass a similar bill on same-sex marriage was thwarted by the dissolution of the legislature-parliament in May 2012. Activists believe the

new law could pave the way for amendments to discriminatory codes.

Sujan Panta, a lawyer with the group, Blue Diamond Society explains: “With the laws today, if a gay man dies, his partner will not be entitled to his property which can only be transferred to kin because the government does not recognise same-sex marriage.” Similarly, only sons and daughters are entitled to a family’s inheritance by law, and there is no provision for the third gender.

Same-sex marriage, if legalised, would also mean that homosexual couples might one day be able to adopt children legally. Currently, couples need to prove that they are infertile before they can apply for adoption, making it almost impossible for same-sex couples to adopt. A legal stamp on same-sex marriage, it is believed, would encourage longer-lasting relationships in the LGBT community.

Bishwaraj Adhikari, 24, (below) is in a two-year long



Hidden in



AYESHA SHAKYA

Although Nepal is considered to be one of the most liberal countries for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) in South Asia, there are signs of reversal and a conservative backlash

in government and the legislature.

Even if gay marriage is legalised, for example, cultural norms and values haven’t kept pace with the amendments. Progress in laws is different from the reality of everyday life of gay, transgender and bisexual citizens.

“One’s masculinity or

femininity is defined by the family. In a conservative society with traditional views on marriage and family structure, changing people’s attitude is very difficult,” said Bharat Man Shrestha, LGBT Human Rights Officer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

paper at least



GAY JATRA: Members of the LGBT community at a rally marking the annual gay pride parade in Kathmandu last year.

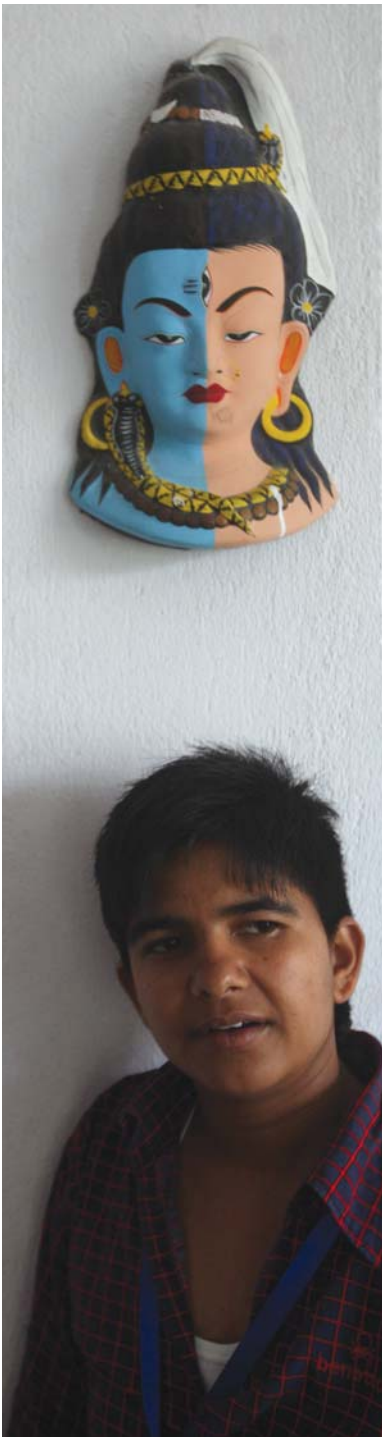
BIKRAM RAI

relationship, and lives with his partner in an apartment in Kathmandu. He says: "I wouldn't have to fear holding my partner's hands in public. Also, recognition from the government will give couples a greater sense of security and belief that there is a future in buying and owning a home together."

While the landmark 2007 decision to decriminalise homosexuality and 2011 census recognition of third gender status made Nepal more progressive and LGBT-friendly, in practice laws are still inflexible, and some constitutional provisions still archaic.

"In Nepal, you get your citizenship certificate when you are 16. Since 2007, people can opt to choose a third gender. But what about the older ones who missed the window?" Panta asks. Last year, Panta filed a case in the Supreme Court to make citizenship laws more flexible. The case is ongoing. It is not just the LGBT community that has problems with citizenship, single mothers find it difficult to obtain papers for their children because Nepal's outdated laws require a father's consent.

Despite laws, local and district administrations still require evidence and documents to prove one's gender, while the



central government only issues citizenship cards of a third gender to new applicants. Bishnu Adhikari (*left*) waited for years before it was favourable to apply for a certificate.

"When I was 16 back in 2004, I was not satisfied to get a female citizenship. I simply waited in hope that it would be possible for me to choose the third gender one day," said the transgendered male, who finally got his certificate when he turned 21.

"I am angry that the provision given by the government is not a full package," says the radio jockey. "Yes, I am proud and happy to identify as a transgendered male, but it also means that I have lost my right to my inheritance, and lost my right to get married."

Khanal, who is also joint secretary at Ministry of Information and Communications, explains changing the particulars of a citizenship card should not be made too easy.

"It might increase the potential of fraud," he says.

Even if the government agrees to institutionalise same-sex marriage, it will not mean change will be immediate. The government has to start the long process of amending existing codes on marriage, citizenship, property and inheritance.

"It is still ultimately up to Parliament to debate and vote changes into law," says Khanal. "It will take a long time before same-sex marriage can really become official. It is difficult to tell, and I can't say when that day will be." 🇳🇵

plain view

Most LGBTs do not come out for fear of being ostracised or cut off by their close friends and family. Shrestha now openly identifies himself as gay, but initially struggled with accepting his sexuality and only came to accept it after exposure to the community and by getting involved directly with the issue.

"I used to think about the reaction from my family and society first. What would they say? But eventually I realised that I was never going to change and that the best thing would be to accept myself," he added. Although out to his close friends and selected family members, he still has not told his parents.

Others have told their parents, but kept it from their extended family. When Sahil came out to his parents, they were supportive, but his mother suggested he keep his sexuality a secret from the rest of the family for the time being.

"She suggested that I come out only after having done something outstanding in the LGBT field," he explained. "That way relatives and extended family members would feel a sense of accomplishment and accept it. At the end of the day, you need to save face in Nepal."

With lobbying and activism by Blue Diamond Society and Mitini, there is more awareness now about LGBT rights. The Gay Pride Parade in Gai Jatra is an accepted annual feature. Sexuality and gender diversity have been included in the school curriculum, and even the immigration cards have a box for 'Other' under Gender. Projects such as Being LGBT in Asia organised by the UNDP and the USAID encourages more dialogue to highlight the rights of gender minorities in Asia.

However, the consequences of such awareness is not always positive. "Awareness cannot be equated with acceptance," explained American researcher Daniel Coyle, who works on sexuality and gender in Nepal. "As awareness increases, there is a chance that you might see more violence against LGBTs."

There is evidence that lesbians face the most severe form of discrimination among gender minorities in Nepal, mainly because they are women. From sexual harassment to societal pressures to conform, lesbians have to deal with being a woman first and handle the discrimination directed at them.

*Some names have been changed

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OPPORTUNITY FOR COOPERATION

Editorial in Kantipur, 31 July

कान्तिपुर

Nepal can and has been working with Indian, Chinese and other countries and donors to develop its hydropower. With India, there can be three types of cooperation: harness border rivers, allow Indian companies to invest in hydropower, and accept Indian government aid for projects. First, the Pancheswor multi-purpose storage project on the border Mahakali River is the one

welcomed. But it may not be appropriate for Nepal to beg India to build Arun. Instead, Nepal could fund it with a soft loan from India, China or build the project by itself to attain self-sufficiency in energy infrastructure. On the eve of the Modi visit, a minimum common understanding seems to be emerging between various political groups, especially with regards the proposed power trade agreement (PTA). The lack of a PTA with India has delayed projects like Upper Karnali and others, which is why it is urgent that its provisions be finalised during the Modi visit. Nepal had sent a draft PTA in 2010, but the Indian side did not respond for four years. When it did send its draft, its ambiguous



KRISHNA GOPAL/KANTIPUR

most ready to go. Nepal and India signed an agreement on this 6,700 MW dam 18 years ago, and the detailed project report is also ready. Pancheswor is mutually beneficial for water and energy, and Nepal should seriously revive the proposal this time. Second, many Indian companies have licenses for hydropower projects in Nepal. Among them, Upper Karnali and Arun III have reached the power development agreement (PDA) stage. The draft for Upper Karnali is ready and can be signed during the Modi visit, and presented as a precedent for other investors. Third, the project most suitable as Modi's gift is Arun III since it is ready to go and is being built by a state-owned Indian company, Sutlej. If a neighbour wants to gift us a project, that would be

provisions made it controversial. It is necessary to separate the generation of hydropower and its trade. We should have an agreement about trading power with India, but how we develop our generation capacity is up to us. We need to do this to remove our crippling power shortage and to spur industrialisation. There are two schools of thought: that we should never have an agreement with India or that we should accept all conditions from India and sign an agreement. We need a middle-of-the-road solution. Nepal should develop its water resources, and for this it needs to cooperate with India while preventing negative longterm impact from it. The visit is an opportunity for Modi, too, to show that he is generous not just in words, but also in deed.



“We’re don’t want to capture anything”

Interview with Indian Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj by Rishi Dhamala in Ghatana ra Bichar, 30 July

घटना विचार

Rishi Dhamala: Rumour has it the covert motive of Modi's visit is to capture Nepal's water resources. Sushma Swaraj: I felt very sad to read about that in the papers before I came here. We don't want to capture the territory or resources of our friends. We want to see Nepal develop and Nepali people happy. We never have and never will have the intention to capture land from the country that is home to Pashupatinath, Janaki, and Gautam Buddha. That is why I want to appeal to intellectuals at all levels that we have no negative stance towards Nepal. We want to develop hydropower in Nepal through big projects, and we only want to buy surplus power. Let there be electricity in every Nepali's home first. We have no policy of monopolising Nepal's water resources.

But the proposal for hydropower cooperation was controversial? I saw no reason for alarm. Still, we have agreed both countries' ministers will sit together and work out an agreement. We are ready to clear misgivings and correct mistakes in that document. It is Nepal's sovereign right to work out its own agreement. India will always respect that.

So, India doesn't want to monopolise hydrpower in Nepal? Absolutely. I urge everyone not to believe such rumours. Our Prime Minister met yours at the swearing-in ceremony in Delhi, and told him India wished to see big hydropower projects develop in Nepal and suggested it could be a way towards prosperity for Nepal. Nepal has a huge trade deficit with India and we believe trading power could help minimise the gap. One quick way to do that is for Nepal to develop power and sell what is excess to India.



Newspaper: “We are unable to save the Adhikari couple.” **Ganga and Nanda Prasad Adhikari:** “We are unable to save Justice.”

कान्तिपुर

Batsayan in Kantipur, 28 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ My bad health will make me less efficient and the criticism will begin. Maybe I should quit right away and hand it over to Ram Chandra Poudel. ”

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala talking to aides in New York, quoted on Jana Aastha, 30 July

Wife suicides

Rabi Dahal in Annapurna Post, 31 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

BIRGANJ: An increasing number of newly-married women are committing suicide because they are tortured by their husband's families. But laws governing such cases are so ambiguous that culprits never face justice. In the past year, ten women aged 19-35 in Parsa hanged or poisoned themselves. The police categorises these as 'family dispute' cases, but each crime is a result of domestic violence by in-laws. Anita Devi Patel, 17, of Pipara was tortured by her in-laws for bringing in an insufficient dowry. She hanged herself on Sunday. Her father Madan Prasad Kurmi says husband Amit Patel drove his daughter to suicide because he couldn't pay Patel's demand of Rs 300,000 and a well-paying job. Anita was married at 13, and has a one-year-old son. Laxman Kalwar's niece Anita Devi was tortured by her husband Bijay Kalwar because he wanted a motorcycle as dowry. Laxman couldn't deliver it on time and Anita killed herself by swallowing poison, 36 days



after getting married. Activists say families can't file a case because current laws don't treat domestic abuse as a possible cause for suicide. Shesh Chandtara of the National Women's Commission says this is a problem widespread in the Tarai. Police officer Dhiraj Pratap Singh says locals don't want to be social outcasts, so they are forced to ignore problems that eventually lead to suicides. He says: "It is easier to take legal steps in domestic abuse cases. But after women kill themselves, it gets difficult to prove."

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KUNDA DIXIT

A month after King Gyanendra's coup d'etat of 1 February 2005, I was summoned to the Royal Nepal Army headquarters at Bhadrakali to meet Lt Gen Rookmangud Katawal. There was an information blackout, and military censors had to approve pages of *Nepali Times* before it went to press.

Katawal had a vice-like handshake which I thought was a part of his psy-war repertoire. In the hour-long conversation, he wanted to know the international reaction to the king's takeover, and delivered a veiled warning to toe the line.

Nearly ten years later, Katawal still has an iron handshake and the same no-nonsense manner. We were meeting on Tuesday in a living room festooned with framed photographs and military honours. His memoir, which will be published by *nepa-laya* this month, is brisk and brusque, just like the abrasive general himself.

As an eight-year-old in Okhaldhunga, Rookmangud Katawal sneaked into the royal tent during a visit by King Mahendra. The king, wearing shades even at night, was so impressed with the boy he got him enrolled in the boarding school in Pharping.

Katawal excelled in studies and never lost his precociousness. A descendant of Dev Raj Katawal, one of Prithvi Narayan Shah's generals who was killed during the siege of Kathmandu in 1767, he was destined for the military. Katawal rose up the ranks, and despite strong opposition from the nobility, became Army Chief during Nepal's dramatic transition from war to peace, from monarchy to republic. Katawal outlasted the royal rulers who were his benefactors.

The general denies he had exclusive access to the royal family, but admits turning those rumours to his advantage. As Liaison Officer to the Brigade of Gurkhas in 1983, he hosted King Birendra in Hong Kong and remembers frantically trying to



KUNDA DIXIT

A general's labyrinth

Former army chief Rookmangud Katawal tells all in soon to be released memoir

find the king's favourite French brandy, and flying in a live goat from Kathmandu for the royal birthday party.

Within five months of the 2001 royal massacre, the army was sucked into the war -- something Birendra had tried to avoid. Katawal was then heading the Department of Military Intelligence, and says the army was made to fight with its hands tied because the palace's instructions were only to disarm the Maoists and force them to negotiate.

Days before Gyanendra's 2005 coup, Katawal noticed four top generals sneaking off frequently to the palace. "Something was cooking," Katawal recalled. The king and army chief reassured Kathmandu-based ambassadors

there was no coup planned. The next day at 9AM, the prime minister was sacked and Gyanendra took over. Katawal remembers one envoy telling him: "Your king is a liar."

Katawal admits he was initially in favour of the royal takeover to "teach the politicians a lesson" so the army could focus on defeating the Maoists. But when Gyanendra appointed Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista as co-chairmen, he knew it wouldn't work. Within 14 months, Gyanendra was forced to step down.

In 2009, with just four months left in his tenure as Army Chief, Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal tried to tempt Katawal to resign in return for an ambassadorship at the UN or France. When the general refused,

Dahal sacked him.

The ensuing cascade of events resulted in President Ram Baran Yadav asking Katawal to continue in office, and Dahal's resignation the next morning. Katawal's account of 3 May 2009 is as riveting as a thriller, how he took two pickups of Special Forces to Baluwatar with instructions to storm the building if he didn't reappear every ten minutes.

Back at HQ, the situation was tense. The Maoists had appointed Gen Kul Bahadur Khadka as Chief, but Katawal was still in charge till midnight. "You bloody joker, what do you think you are doing?" Katawal says he told Khadka, but what he really said is probably unprintable.

"Prachanda knew if he could take over the army no one could

stop him," Katawal says. Had he accepted Dahal's offer of ambassadorship and resigned, or surrendered on 3 May, Nepal may be a different place today -- probably a one-party dictatorship.

Katawal doesn't hide his disdain for Dahal's manipulations, "Mr Cloud" (Ram Bahadur Thapa) and his hard line, Girija Koirala for capitulating to the Maoists, or Ian "Mr Comrade" Martin and UNMIN for undermining democracy.

After two recent books by Sudheer Sharma and Prashant Jha which detail the depth of involvement of Indian intelligence, Katawal's memoir gives us another insider's account of the events that shaped recent Nepali history. An English translation is awaited. 🇳🇵

EXCERPTS

Two translated sections from Rookmangud Katawal's memoir.

 nepalitimes.com

■ Past imperfect, #452 ■ Hand-to-hand, #448
■ Start again, #452

APRIL 2006

"Your king is a liar," British ambassador Bloomfield told me one day.

I could not accept such things being said about our head of state and supreme commander. I shot back: "How could you ever say that about my king?"

Bloomfield repeated even more tersely: "He is not fit to be king."

The exchange went on for a while, but I could not convince the ambassador. None of the Kathmandu-based envoys were for an active monarchy, so they were not welcome in the palace.

But the people surrounding King Gyanendra, and those who were using his power, did not warn the King that he was losing international support. At a time when he should have been showing some flexibility, the King had become more rigid.

I tried to convince the Chief several times to take the message to the King that he should meet the NC and UML, which still had popular support. He never replied.



3 MAY 2009

"We are not going to surrender. No way," I told President Ram Baran Yadav's adviser. "I don't want to do anything unpleasant myself. My legitimacy finishes by 12 midnight."

At about 11PM, the President called.

"Do I have to put it in writing?" The President asked. "Can't I not write it?"

I replied: "If it is not in writing, there will be a question of legitimacy. A letter would resolve the issue."

By then, KP Oli had got to the palace despite his health problems, and called to say the President had decided to send the letter and to inform all the generals.

A few minutes later, the fax arrived, reinstating the Chief of Army Staff. It was a clear and direct letter, just as we wanted. Soon after, my mobile and all the landlines started ringing off the hook.

The needle on my watch approached midnight. But I wasn't sleepy, I went outside to meet my soldiers.



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Touchy-feely bilateral relationship

Now that Prime Minister Shri Jhusilji has decided to do on to Shri Modiiji what Shri Manmohanji did to his cousin Shri Girijaji, and break protocol to go to the airport to receive him on Sunday, his advisers at Balu Water are scratching their heads about what would be the appropriate way to greet his Indian counterpart. Not that I have been asked, but the Ass would like to offer the PM's mandarins a menu of options about how SuKo should greet NaMo:

1. Namaskar:

This, of course, would be hugely symbolic since the greeting represents the age-old bonds of culture and agriculture that join our two great nations. It would also allow Nepal to keep India at arm's length. However, it is a bit impersonal and doesn't do enough to underline the interactivity that Indians and Nepalis share. I would suggest that Shri Jhusil wrap both his hands around Shri Modiiji's namaskar and oscillate it counter-clockwise for a mutually acceptable duration. However, our prime minister shouldn't get carried away, and should let go of Modiiji's hands after 7.5 seconds, unless he lets go. Whichever happens first.

2. Hand-shake:

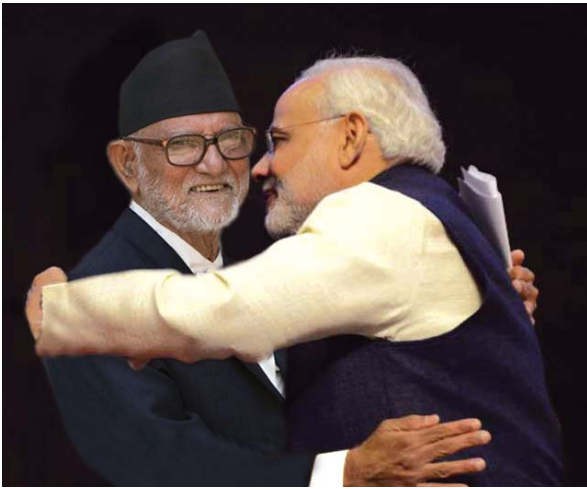
If the PM wants to show that Nepal would like to keep its distance from India, then a curt handshake would be the appropriate gesture. The question then arises, what should Nepal's response be if Modiiji uses both hands to immediately grab Jhusil Da's outstretched right hand? Our PM should be briefed that he should then use his left hand to cover both of Modiiji's hands and not let him get away with what could be construed as a high-handed behaviour.

3. Touching Feet:

This is an absolute no-no. No one touches anyone's feet. Comrade Amrace can do it if he wants.

4. Bear Hug:

Before 1990, hugging His Majesty the King was out of the question for a visiting Indian PM. But since then, the leaders of Nepal and India are prone to hugging each other tight at the slightest provocation, probably to locate each others' soft spots. Hugging is fine, but keep it within the bounds of decency.



COMPUTER MONTAGE

5. Bear Hug with Kiss:

Ever since Brezhnev and Honecker indulged in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation at the airport in Berlin in 1983, some world leaders of the leftist persuasion still French kiss one another from time to time. My view on the sensitive topic of political osculation is that we must make a distinction between lip-service and tongue-lashing. And as long as kissing is taboo in

Bollywood cinema, the leaders of our two countries should desist from smooching each other in public. (Kissing ass in private is fine.)

6. Holding Both Hands:

This is the way Bhutan's leaders greet Indian leaders, and there is no reason we should emulate Jigme the Fifth unless we have run out of our own ideas, and want to be in the same category of bilateral relations. Remember: body language is a very important indication of one country's intention towards another, and every move will be closely scrutinised for meaning.

7. Casually Holding Hands Inside Bomb-Proof Vehicle from Airport:

Avoid.

8. Arm Around the Shoulder:

What should Jhusilji do if Modiiji puts his arm around his shoulder? Fortunately, this situation won't arise because Modi is younger, and Jhusil is Big Brother. However, it should be ok for Nepal's PM, if he feels up to it, to put his arm around the Indian PM's shoulder especially after a couple of drinks at the state banquet while singing "Hum Tum".

9. High Five:

This would be my personal recommendation because it does not break protocol, it is not all touchy-feely, and keeps a certain distance while at the same time showcasing informal bonhomie between equals.

The Ass



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