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January 22



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Political laxative needed

Nothing in Nepali politics is at it appears, one has to read between the lines of headlines. So, if it seems like the disagreement about the constitution is intractable you can be sure the argument is actually about something else: power sharing after January 22.

This being the case, there is no other way to break the logjam than to push through a constitution draft containing just the points of agreement, leaving the disputed issues for later. Failing that, we can allow the opposition to write notes of dissent. And if that doesn't work either, the parties can extend the term of the CA again with the face-saving device of forming a government of national unity and pledge to finish the job once and for all by early 2015.

TASKLESS FORCE
EDITORIAL PAGE 2



GREG WILLIS

CHANGU

Stéphane Huët explores the cradle of Kathmandu Valley civilisation and its world class museum

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SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

The pros and cons of positive discrimination in the new constitution.

THE GADFLY
BY DAVID SEDDON

PAGE 3

TIME TO GROW UP

We have already lost decades in stalled development, we don't need messy politics to compound the problem.

BY THE WAY
BY ANURAG ACHARYA

PAGE 15



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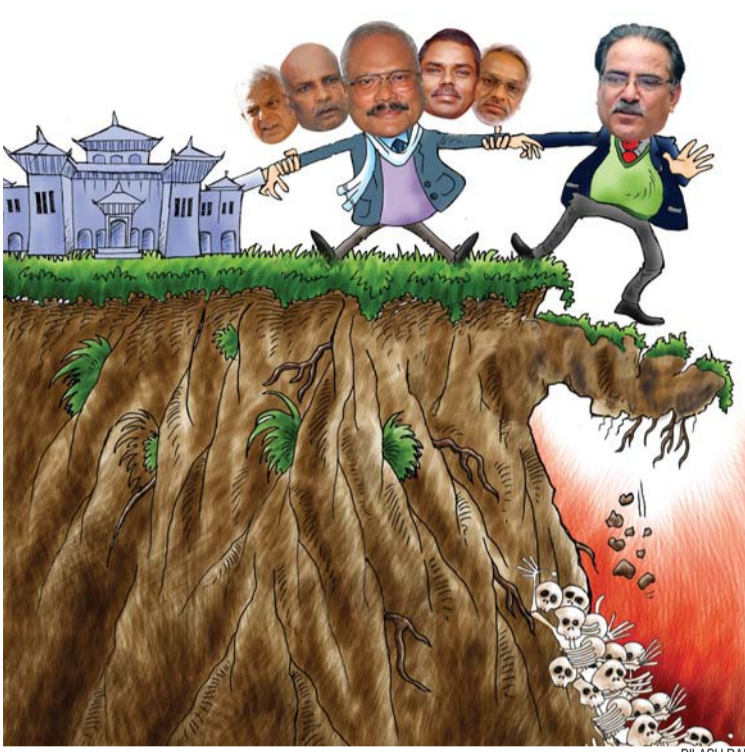
The atmosphere inside the Prime Minister’s parlour at Baluwatar on 20 December was chilly, and it wasn’t just that the heating wasn’t adequate. The top leaders of the Nepali Congress, UML, UCPN(M) and Madhesi Front who had gathered around did not have their usual smiles, and there was no back-slapping.

UML Chair KP Oli, blunt as always, lashed out at Pushpa Kamal Dahal accusing him of being publicly two-faced: sabotaging the constitution writing process while appearing to be working on finding an agreement. “Please don’t try to divide the country by dragging it into ethnic conflict, and push an economically unviable federalism,” Oli said. PM Koirala used more diplomatic language, but his advice to Dahal was the same.

Dahal got up and abruptly walked out. Outside, he accused Oli of trying to be a “maharaja” and two days later held a press conference with 30 Madhesi and smaller ethnic-based parties to announce a street stir and general strikes in the run-up to 22 January against what he said was the NC-UML trying to bulldoze a constitution on the basis of their two-thirds majority in the CA. Even more intriguing, the CPN-M led by the ailing Mohan Baidya which boycotted elections, and isn’t even in the CA, also announced parallel strikes for mid-January “in coordination” with Dahal.

Nothing in Nepali politics is at it appears, one has to read between the lines of headlines. So, if it seems like the disagreement about how many federal provinces, of what kind, and what they should be named looks intractable, you can be sure the argument is not about federalism at all but about something else. Indeed, it is not the constitution that is holding things up since the NC-UML on the one hand the Maoist-Madhesi on the other had both narrowed down their differences in recent months.

As we have been pointing out in this space for months now, the deadlock is actually about the post-constitution power play. There was an agreement in February 2014 between the NC and UML about having an election for president, vice-



If it's the top leaders who decide everything in secret, what is the point having a Dialogue Committee, a Task Force or even an elected Constituent Assembly?

president, prime minister and CA chair within one month of the promulgation of the new constitution. What no one foresaw last year was that the politicians would be so selfish that they would use those positions as bargaining chips for

passing a new constitution. It is tragic that a document of such great importance to the future of this country is held hostage by the lust for short-term power of a few people at the helm of this country.

Dahal has made no attempt to hide the fact that he covets the president’s job. In repeated meetings with NC and UML leaders he has said: “What’s in it for me?” President Ram Baran Yadav is adamant that the constitution allows him to continue till the next general election under a new constitution. Oli had a pact with Koirala to rotate the prime ministership. Everyone now seems to be having second thoughts about past agreements on power-sharing, but they are trying to mask that by concocting excuses about differences over federalism and form of government in the new constitution.

There is no doubt that the NC and UML are trying to press home the advantage of their combined strength in the CA. There is some truth in the Maoist argument that the old boys in the NC-UML are status quoists. But no one believes anymore that the Maoist-Madhesi agenda is any more inclusive or progressive. They are as opportunistic and greedy as everyone else.

This being the case, we see no other way to break the logjam than to push through on 22 January a constitution draft containing just the points of agreement, leaving the contentious issues for later. Failing that, we can allow the opposition to write notes of dissent. After all if the Hindu-right and monarchist RPP-N, whose disagreement with the NC-UML on the constitution is even more fundamental than the Maoists, says it can accept a majoritarian constitution, there is no reason why the Maoists can’t.

And if that doesn’t work, the alternative is a déjà vu scenario from 28 May 2012 when we once again have no constitution, and the parties give themselves more time. One face-saving device in front of their electorate could be for Koirala to form a government of national unity and pledge to finish the job once and for all in early 2015.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

CONSTITUTION

We need to suggest a mechanism to decide what's right, since two CA exercises have been futile ('Mixed signals', Editorial, #738). A roundtable as argued by escapists is childish.

@nepalite

Absolutely, spot on. The constitution has to be suitable for Nepal and Nepalis. Don't give in to an individual's specific goal but rather focus on benefits for all

Rakesh Upreti

I like the idea of the doomsday clock and I bet it will work ('Playing the shame game', Marty Logan, #738). Now we need some tv station to listen to your idea and implement it. I don't think a clock tower in front of BICC will work, our very competent and caring leaders would not let that happen.

Anonymous

It's almost certain now that 22 Jan will come and go without the Constitution Nepalis deserve. So rest easy. Dissolve CA2 and start fresh. When we have waited 24 years, another year shouldn't matter to find honest and sincere leaders. No constitution is better than a lousy one.

M

GENDER INEQUALITY

Transplants are heavily skewed in favour of men ('A kidney has no gender', Binita Dahal, #738). Just another product of this patriarchal society.

Casey Seanigar

So, there is gender inequality even in sharing kidneys.

Rudra Pangehi

STATELESS

When Nepal's Interim Constitution 2006 and Nepal Citizenship Act 2006 provides for citizenship under the mother's name, I don't understand why the right of having a citizenship is being denied to Neha ('In a stateless state', Mina Sharma, From the Nepali Press, #738). It's really a feature of bad governance of all the regional nations including Nepal.

Zahid

Trust the Government of Nepal

Adhikari, #738). But a lot changed for those who were victims of the violence they unleashed.

Hurray

Yet another example of the painfully high cost of 'revolution'.

Saroj Dhital

How can the government expect NRNs to invest in Nepal when they refrain from giving citizenship to their own women? This is downright discrimination. Nepali politicians need to broaden their aging brains or make space for fresh minds.

Shiv Bahadur

ART MATTERS

Great work by the artist: a perfect blend of sensationalism and substance where the immense hype was backed up by his creativity albeit, I would have to argue about the originality ('Art for heart's sake', Stephane Huet, #738). Most artists refrain from explaining the reasoning behind their work and leave the viewers to decipher the image for themselves which is what makes art so powerful. Unlike mathematics where we only have one concrete answer, the beauty in art lies in the

TS

fact that imagination can run free with varying interpretations. In an art show I hosted in New York, Nepalis hound the artist to explain the meaning to each of his art in detail. This is sad. Let an empty canvas put up for display be seen as it is – you, the patron (and a free-thinker) don't need to be cheated off your analysis and have a mass-market produced explanation forced down your throat. Your own rationale trumps any explanation out there (including the artist's).

Karma T Nyangmi

BOWS AND ARROWS

It's a great new place for my daughter to practice shooting arrows, but it's a bit on the costly side ('Bringing back archery', Elvin Shrestha, #738).

Sports lover

ASS

As always, you are the best ('High resolutions', Ass, #738)! I am always entertained by your columns and look forward to a new one right after I reading the current one. Ass, your writing is not only funny but informative.

Anonymous

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Times

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Weekly Internet Poll #739

Q. Should Pushpa Kamal Dahal be appointed the next President?

Total votes: 616

Yes 14.3%

No 84.4%

Don't know/ can't say 1.3%

Weekly Internet Poll #740

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Q. How confident are you that 2015 will be better than 2014?

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Associate Editor: Tsering Dolker Gurung | Online Producer: Ayesha Shakya | Design: Kiran Maharjan

Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd | Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur | GPO Box 7251 Kathmandu

editors@nepalitimes.com | www.nepalitimes.com | www.himalmedia.com | Tel: 01-5005601-08 Fax: +977-1-5005518

Marketing: Arjun Karki, Surendra Sharma rachanas@himalmedia.com | Advertorials: Ram Krishna Banjara | Subscriptions: Santosh Aryal santosha@himalmedia.com

Printed at Jagadamba Press | 01-5250017-19 | www.jagadambapress.com

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Some are more equal than others

Universal human rights and social justice must surely be the basis of a progressive Constitution. But equality before the eyes of the law does not necessarily confer equality of opportunity, let alone equality of outcome.



THE GADFLY David Seddon

In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the last and most important of the seven commandments was that 'all animals are equal'. But when the pigs, under the command of Napoleon and his henchmen Snowball and Squealer, gain power (having overthrown Farmer Jones and having established an animal-run society on the farm), they change this to: 'all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others'.

Positive discrimination – whether formal or informal – can be used to consolidate the power of the minority, and in this way to undermine the principles of equality and social justice.

If a progressive social transformation is to take place in an unequal society, it may be engineered in various ways. Where it is the majority that is disadvantaged, it may be possible for them to mobilise or to be mobilised to overthrow or in

other ways replace the minority in power and thus gain control of their own destinies. It may even be possible for a particular disadvantaged social group to mobilise in such a way as to gain major concessions from those in power, or an enlightened minority in power may simply agree to transfer rights and powers to disadvantaged groups. But the last of these is rare, unless there is pressure from below.

In Nepal, there is a real need for those who have been historically disadvantaged in various ways to mobilise themselves to increase their representation in the body politic. Existing rights must be defended and attempts to reduce them resisted.

Any suggestion, for example, that rights to citizenship may be re-defined to prevent children of Nepali mothers from acquiring citizens' rights automatically where their fathers are not Nepali, should be strongly resisted and women's equal rights in this regard – and others – maintained. Already, there have been substantial demonstrations of protest at the suggestion that the Constitution may replace 'or' by 'and'.

But to what extent should 'minority' rights be privileged over the rights of others, rather than simply defended and ensured? In Britain, the Labour Party eventually – after much debate – decided to introduce women's short lists for parliamentary candidates. This has undoubtedly boosted both the proportion of women candidates

The pros and cons of 'positive discrimination'



and the number of those selected as MPs. Even the Conservative Party has adopted a modified version encouraging some positive discrimination in favour of women at the level of parliamentary candidates. But concern that this is mere tokenism continues and many, including women, disagree with this tactic.

How far and by what criteria should there be 'reserved quotas' for political candidates from identified 'minorities', as in India (scheduled Tribes and Castes), and as at present in Nepal (women, Dalits, Adivasi, Janajati, Madhesi, and others from disadvantaged regions)? It could be said that this is discriminatory in two ways: first, it privileges certain identified groups and second, it further disadvantages others, including all of the 'minorities' not

so identified (eg Muslims, people with disabilities, etc). In this sense, it is selective and undemocratic. The proposal to divide Nepal into federal states also seeks to 'redress' historical disadvantages by positive discrimination, whether regional or by 'ethnic identity' -- again, arguably both arbitrary and discriminatory, and ultimately undemocratic.

But this is to focus on the selection of political representatives. What about the process whereby the people are themselves represented? Why do they have to accept the candidates selected by others (eg the parties) and not be free to select their own candidates? It was to this that the participants in 'the umbrella revolution' in Hong Kong objected – the selection by the Chinese Communist Party of the candidates

for election. Perhaps we should focus more on the process of selection of candidates and the process of voting?

Political parties in Nepal (as elsewhere) tend to select their own candidates and then present them to the electorate. But it would be perfectly possible to envisage a system in which there is greater possibility for 'independents' to stand and more than one round of voting (as in many presidential elections). Two of the major parties in Nepal have now, it seems, opted for a first-past-the-post system of judging who gains the majority of votes, others prefer proportional representation. It could be argued that the latter was the more democratic, but there could be (as in the first Constituent Assembly election) a combination of the two systems.

And, if there is to be positive discrimination, why accept the current practice in which each voter has only one vote – even if it is a single transferrable vote? The use of ranking is widely used in a variety of elections and it would be possible to adopt a system in which all candidates were ranked by voters in order of preference, and those with the top-ranked votes won. Finally, an even more radical suggestion: what about allowing certain categories of voters more than one ballot paper – imagine how rapidly things might change if women all had two ballot papers each and Dalits three – giving Dalit women five votes.

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PICS: ELAINE WANG YIWEI



The Chinese are coming

...but a lot more tourists from China would visit if there was more information about Nepal online in Mandarin

CLAIRE LI YINGXUE
in POKHARA

One of the most dramatic changes along shopfronts in Thamel and Pokhara these days are the number of signs in Chinese. In the sidewalks you are now more likely to hear Mandarin than English, or even Nepali, as the number of visitors from China soars.

Nepali shopkeepers have also learnt Mandarin and converse fluently with Chinese tourists. Even in Chitwan, the safari guides can tell you all the Chinese names of animals and along the Annapurna trail, lodge-owners have a smattering of Mandarin.

A lot of this is borne out of necessity since the number of Chinese tourists is growing, and most of them do not speak English.

A walk around Pokhara's Lakeside and in Thamel there are signs of a demographic shift in tourism. What used to be a hub for European backpackers and a haven for Nepali revelers is today dominated by tourists from China. And, businesses are cashing in on the growth.

Signs after signs in Chinese greet you from the many haphazardly constructed buildings that make up this tourist district. Nowhere is this more prominent than the lane from Jyatha leading towards Thamel which is now aptly called Chinatown.

Chinese businesswoman Sun Junhong came to Nepal last year and opened Jiudingyuan Hotel, one of the dozen Chinese-owned hotels in the area. Sun was encouraged to open a business here by her sister who owns a Chinese restaurant just few metres away.

"During the busy season, all our rooms get booked," says Sun who is from Sichuan province. Most of the hotels and restaurants in Thamel's China town are owned by Chinese nationals like Sun who are encouraged to come to Kathmandu by relatives. "The government issues business licenses to foreigners to open these establishments, that's why it is easy," says Sun.

However, the retail shops and travel agencies that dot this lane are owned by Nepalis, one main reason is that foreigners cannot apply for retail licenses.

Uttam Pokharel who runs a travel agency in Chinatown says learning the language is key to dealing with Chinese tourists.

"Only few of them speak English therefore we have to learn Chinese," says Pokharel who has trained all his staff to speak the language.

Aijaz Ahmad Rather of The Cashmere House, a popular store in the area echoes Pokharel's statement. Rather started studying Chinese three years ago along with his brother.

"Back then there was only one Chinese teacher, today there are many," he says.

Besides learning the language, shop owners like Rather have also

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२ वर्षे

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learned to use an online Chinese payment system, which makes it more convenient for him to deal with Chinese customers. Rather has downloaded popular Chinese chatting apps to communicate with his Chinese customers, such as QQ and Wechat.


Says Rather: "Several years ago, I was waiting for American shoppers, now I'm waiting for Chinese."

While visitors from China have been coming to Nepal for decades, it was after 2009 that their numbers took off.

According to Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, the number of Chinese tourists increased sharply to 113,173 in 2013 from only 32,272 in 2009, a 250 per cent jump.

Most young Chinese like to travel by themselves, they prefer to look up place to visit and stay, or airlines to fly online before they arrive. However, when they search for information about Nepal, it is still all in English.

This week's Pokhara's Street Festival and Chitwan's Elephant Festival would have been huge attractions to Chinese tourists, but their online promotions only had Facebook pages which is in English and blocked in China.

International travel websites like Tripadvisor and booking.com have Chinese versions, and welcomenepal.com is one of the few Nepali sites that has a Chinese page. Others, like nepaltourism.info, visitnepal.com, and nepaltravels.com, are available only in English and don't seem to have woken up to the fact that the Chinese are coming. 



On location in Pokhara

Pokhara surpasses Kathmandu as the most popular destination for Chinese tourists in Nepal because of the popularity of a Chinese movie shot on location here -- so it is hardly surprising that businesses are now amping up efforts to cater to this group.

In the last two years alone, Pokhara's Lakeside has seen eight Chinese restaurants open and more are set to start business in the coming months. Signboards in Chinese are now a common sight. Chilly Bar, a popular continental eatery recently started serving Chinese buffet after getting a throng of Chinese visitors.

"It has been two years since we started getting more Chinese tourists," says Gita Lamsal Sigdel who has a paragliding store. A letter hung outside the shop in Chinese reads: 'It was so exciting, we enjoyed paragliding here!'

A Chinese movie Up in the Wind shot in Pokhara was a hit among Chinese youth when it was released last year, driving the popularity of this lake city among young Chinese who want to enjoy the scenery and adventure that the city offers just like the characters did in the movie. In addition, Chinese tourist guidebooks list Pokhara as one of the "Top Ten places in the world to see before you die".

China by air

Air links across the Himalaya from Nepal to China are about to get much more traffic with the announcement that Sichuan Airlines is to start flying Chengdu-Lhasa-Kathmandu from this month, the fourth Chinese carrier connecting Kathmandu to the mainland.

Presently, Air China flies the Chengdu-Lhasa-Kathmandu route four times a week, and China Southern connects Kathmandu to Guangzhou twice daily. China Eastern's Kathmandu-Kunming flights will now extend to Shanghai Pudong International Airport. This leaves Beijing as the only major Chinese city with no direct flight to Nepal.

The number of weekly flights from Chinese cities to Kathmandu is expected to double to 70. By February, Himalaya Airlines, which is



a new joint venture between Tibet Airlines, Yeti Airlines and another Nepali partner will operate Lhasa-Kathmandu with two Airbus 319s.

China is now the second largest tourist source country to Nepal, and the number of Chinese tourists has nearly doubled in the past year. "We are getting a lot of inquiries from Chinese agencies," says Prakash Neupane, the founder of the domestic

online booking site, Nepflights (see page 7).

Nepflights is aiming at Chinese customers because of the potential for growth. "The prediction is that within one year China is going to be the Number One tourist market for Nepal," Neupane told Nepali Times.

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Sherpa gear

Sherpa Adventure Gear is looking to develop a talent pool for its manufacturing base for outdoor apparel and equipment in Nepal itself, founder Tashi Sherpa said at an interaction with media, NGOs and human relations officers in Kathmandu on Friday. The Seattle-based multinational sources part of its



manufacturing in Nepal where it employs nearly 2,000 people. "We want to be a progressive, profitable company and connect the history of our people to its future," Sherpa said. The company ships its Made in Nepal products to 22 countries from here.

Making history

Qatar Airways' first Airbus A350 XWB (Xtra Wide Body) and its fourth A380 arrived in Doha simultaneously on 24 December. The delivery of the newest members of Qatar Airways' fleet of 146 aircraft are the first of 80 A350s and the fourth of 13 A380s on order. The A350 aircraft, for which Qatar Airways is the global launch customer, is set to commence service on the Doha-Frankfurt route starting in January 2015.



New colors

Colors Mobile launched its newest smartphone X113+ Quad last week. A Dual SIM smart phone, the X113+ Quad is equipped with a Quadcore processor and runs on Android 4.4.2 KitKat OS. The X113+ Quad is priced at just Rs 10,550.

Style check

Etihad Airways revealed its new uniforms at a show in Abu Dhabi last week. The new uniform was designed by Italian Haute Couturier Ettore Bilotta and was introduced system-wide from 27 December.



The winners

A team led by pro golfer Surya Prasad Sharma won the Surya Nepal Western Open Pro-Am title at the par-70 Himalayan Golf Course in Pokhara on Saturday. The other members include amateurs Rupendra Shrestha, Jiwaram Gurung and Maj Bejoy Muktan who accumulated 135 points to win the trophy.

Exchange Carnival

Pooja International, the authorized dealer of Volkswagen in Nepal is organizing the 'Polo Exchange Carnival' on the occasion of 4th anniversary of sales of Volkswagen cars in Nepal. Customers can exchange their old cars for a brand new Polo G from 1-10 January at Thapathali and Panipokhari showrooms. The company promises best valuation, special discounts and spot financing during the offer.

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APLINE SHOOT: Capt Vijay Lama (left) who acts as a rescue pilot in the forthcoming Hollywood movie *Everest* on location in the Italian Alps in early 2014 with a helicopter painted in Nepal Army colours.

Back to Everest in 2015

Two Hollywood movies about tragic mountaineering expeditions 60 years apart are to be released in 2015, with a blaze of publicity for the Himalaya that is expected to give a boost to Nepal's trekking tourism.

The first is *Everest* directed by Baltasar Kormákur who made *The Deep* and *Contraband*, and stars Jake Gyllenhaal, Jason Clarke, John Hawkes and Josh Brolin. The film is based on the traffic jam on the summit ridge of Mt Everest in 1996 during a storm in which eight climbers died, a story told in Jon Krakauer's best-selling *Into Thin Air*.

The story revolves around Beck Weathers, an American climber who miraculously survived two nights above 8,000m and was rescued with a Taiwanese climber, by Nepali Army rescue pilot, Col Madan KC from Camp II. The risky rescue was the highest-ever helicopter landing in history at the time. Col KC's role is played

by Nepali actor and airline pilot, Capt Vijay Lama.

The second movie was also confusingly called 'Everest' and depicts the story of British climbers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine who disappeared in 1922 trying to be the first to climb Mt Everest. Mallory's body was found 70 years later on the North Face of the mountain. The

movie is based on a novel by Jeffrey Archer called *Paths of Glory* which says the two reached the summit.

For Vijay Lama, who has acted in numerous Nepali films over the last three decades, 2014 was an exciting year in which he got to experience how Hollywood movies are made. He was on location in the Italian Alps in early 2014 where some of the scenes of the helicopter rescue on Mt Everest were shot. Later, he went to Pinewood Studios to shoot some of the other scenes in a flight simulator.

"I got to be treated like a star with other members of the cast, including Josh Brolin, Martin Henderson, John Hawkes," Lama recalled, "ever since my first Nepali film I had always dreamt of acting in a Hollywood movie. I am living proof that dreams are not impossible if you believe in it

and pursue it honestly."

Being a pilot made the role easier for Lama, who insisted on speaking in Nepali with his co-pilot with English subtitles.

Lama says he was also impressed with the logistics and preparation that goes into an international film shoot. "The crew and the cast of *Everest* is so huge that it took many people who were assigned specific tasks to work together," he recalls, "one little mistake would mean huge losses. It was a team game, team spirit, team effort and most of all team discipline – something we in Nepal can learn from."

Working in the mountains of Val Senales in Italy was not easy for the crew and cast, there were blizzards, wind and unexpected delays. In comparison, it was easier shooting at Pinewood where the summit of Everest, the Hillary Step, helicopter simulators were all recreated in the studio.

Says Lama: "Working with these international units have humbled me and have given me more reason to work harder in the coming days and learn to be more professional in the subjects I am involved in."

Lama has been featured in a Channel 4 documentary on extreme airports, where he is filmed landing in Lukla and Talcha, as well as the 2011 Discovery Channel documentary on the world's most dangerous airports. This year, he has also been busy with Nepali films, including playing the lead role in Sudarshan Thapa's *Ajhai Pani*, and was acting in *Punarjanam* when his brother-in-law and director Alok Nembang died tragically. He is also acting with Saugat Malla and Priyanaka Karki in *Sadanga*.

Lama will have to leave in January for Bombay to shoot some more scenes for *Everest* and then for simulator training in Toulouse for the new Airbus 320 that Nepal Airlines is acquiring.

He says: "Looks like 2015 will be even more hectic than 2014." 🇳🇵
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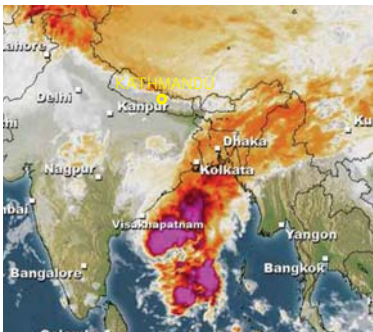
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■ Heroes on Everest, #691



Looks like we are headed for another bout of cloud and rain into the weekend as a storm in the Bay of Bengal heads north. The westerlies will blow some of the outlying tentacles away from the Himalaya, but the system is huge and it will bring cloud cover and some precipitation to central and eastern Nepal into Friday and Saturday. Expect snow down to 3,500m and light rain in the lower valleys in the east. Kathmandu Valley will have cloud buildup, chance of a passing shower on Saturday and morning fog on Sunday.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
16° 5°	16° 8°	16° 3°

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APPs for all occasions

In a country where only 10 per cent of phone users have smartphones, mobile internet is slow and expensive, where payment gateways are non-existent or unreliable, and ICT awareness is low, it may be a bit premature to talk about Made in Nepal apps. But that hasn't deterred Nepali software engineers and cyber entrepreneurs to go boldly forth where few Nepalis have ventured. The trends are encouraging: one-third of Nepal's 9 million internet users already access the Net through their phones, and as smartphones become cheaper their use is growing exponentially. Telecom companies are also eager to upgrade to 4G. We present on pages 7-9 products by Nepali app developers that show the most promise.

CYBER FLIGHTS

After graduating in computer science from Tribhuvan University, Prakash Neupane worked as a software developer like many of his classmates.

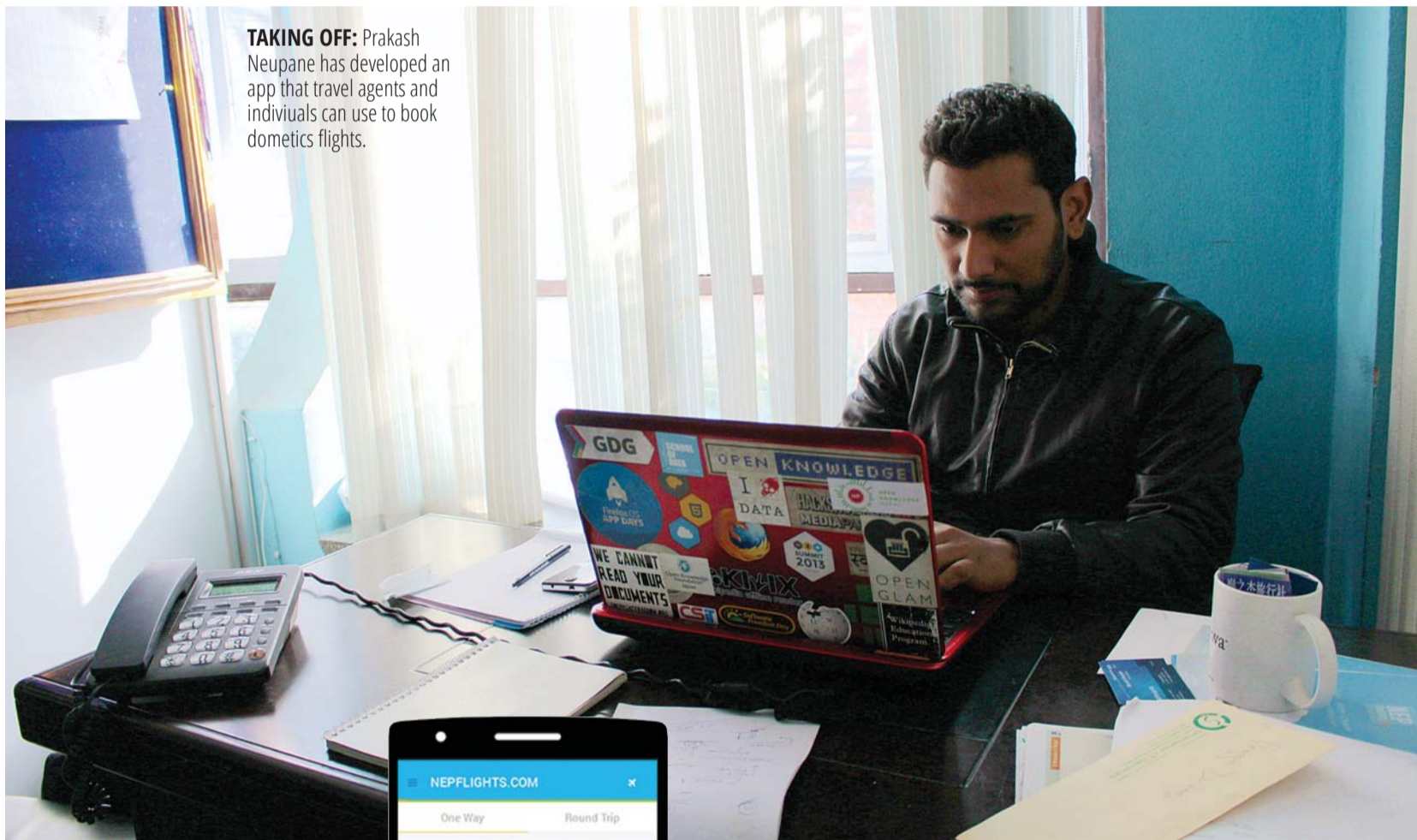
But unlike them he wasn't angling to migrate, he dreamt of staying in Nepal and starting his own software business. He saw an opportunity to combine the leapfrogging potential of smartphone apps and Nepal's growing aviation industry.

"I had the idea of integrating all travel businesses, providing a single solution," said Neupane who initially wanted flights, hotels, trekking, even bungee jumping and elephant rides. But after careful research, he decided to focus on domestic flights.

Nepflights is the only website providing solely domestic flights booking in Nepal with five airlines, four payment methods and up to 25 destinations.

At first none of the airlines were interested. Neupane changed tack and visited Flight Connection International, which came in as an investor and also brought the airlines.

Faced with a mature offline travel market and established customer behaviour, it was a slow start. Even today, over 90 per cent of travel agencies in Nepal do not have online booking access to the



TAKING OFF: Prakash Neupane has developed an app that travel agents and individuals can use to book domestic flights.

ELAINE WANG YIWEI

airline system and have to book tickets through phones. Of the 3,500 travel agencies in Nepal 270 are using the Nepflights system, but the number is growing.

With an 'Agents' section on its website, a travel agency can easily join the booking system. In fact, 95 per cent of Nepflights' business comes from travel agencies in what is called 'B2B' (business-to-business). Nepflights receives a 6-9 per cent commission from airlines by providing a platform to sell tickets to travel

agencies. Nepflights gives eight per cent of the commission to travel agencies.

The other model is called 'B2C' (business to customer) in which travelers book directly from their websites and pay either online via PayPal or Esewa or offline. Neupane hopes that most of his revenue will ultimately be B2C once he sorts out the online payment problem.

"We will be the Nepali version of Kayak for domestic flight in Nepal," Neupane said. Kayak is the

leading flight booking website internationally.

Although he decided to focus on the domestic market for the moment, Neupane always keep an eye on the bigger picture, and he is cashing in on the China market (see page 4-5).

Asked where he sees himself in five years, the 25-year-old thinks for a while and says carefully: "We are going to be the platform for all travel-related businesses in Nepal." Elaine Wang Yiwei

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HONDA



WHAT IS APP

Getting sentimental about the Net

In this digital era, billions of users around the world express their thoughts on blogs, social networks or in comments accompanying news articles. This is a gold mine for businesses that want to track what is being said about them, but it is a complicated process to track and analyse these opinions.

A decade ago, sentiment analysis emerged as a way to monitor opinions expressed on the Internet using algorithms using key words to chart what is said about whom and when.

"Basically, it is the process of crawling raw data on the web to segment them between positive and negative sentiments," explains Chandan Goopta, a

computer student at Kathmandu University.

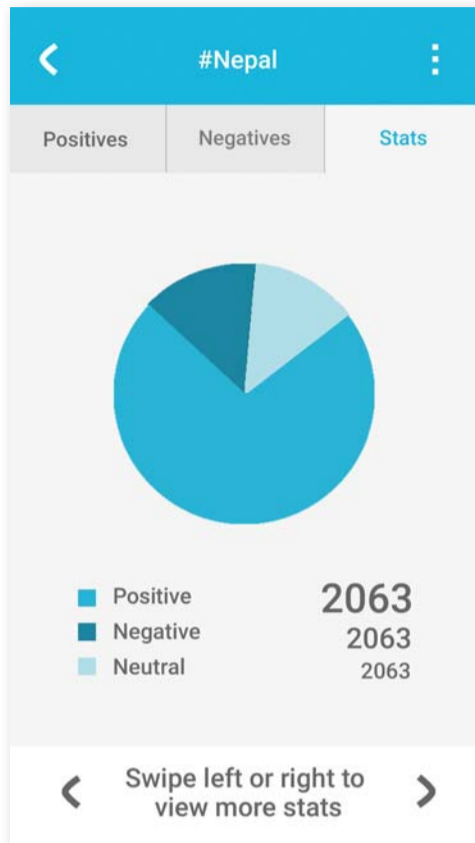
Considering that there wasn't much research on the subject around the world, Goopta started studying the domain for his thesis two years ago to analyse Nepali newspaper editorials.

While teaching elements of his research to Bachelor students in computer engineering, Goopta met undergrads who were eager to explore the subject further. "I was more into Big Data before," says Amit Joshi, one of Goopta's students. "But it's more exciting to be able to interpret data for sentiment analysis."

Knowledge acquired during research and a group of motivated youngsters were the base for the foundation of SentiNep in June 2014. Ashmit Bhattarai, Pratik Shrestha and Akriti Bhusar complete the team that conceived The Opinio app.

SentiNep worked continuously for the last six months to ensure the launch of the first sentiment analysis app of Nepal for the end of January. Its programming involved artificial intelligence, machine learning and natural language processing.

The Opinio reads statements in English and Nepali. "As sentiments are often expressed in

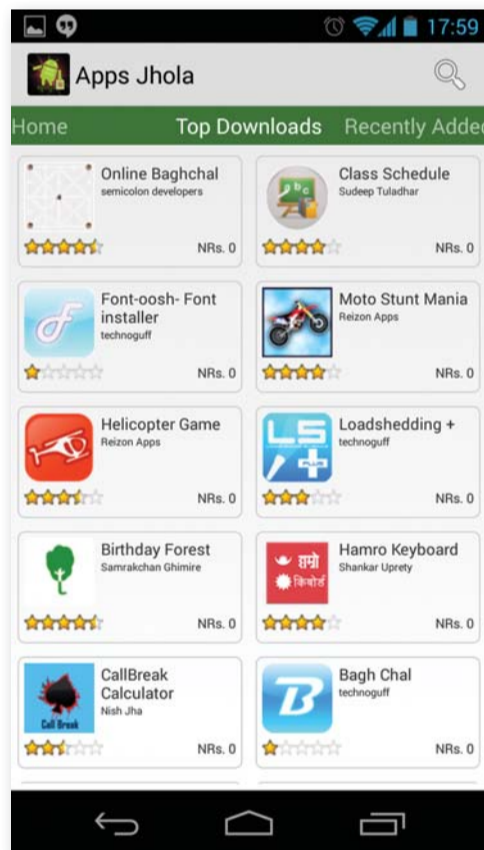


English and most of our press is in Nepali, we programmed it to be bilingual," explains Akriti Bhusar, the designer of SentiNep.

The premium version of The Opinio offers an all-in-one platform that enables businesses to receive notifications instantaneously and reply to users on different social networks directly from the app. "That's our key selling point as no one has time to lose," explains Goopta.

SentiNep won the Corporate sector prize at NCell App Camp on 11 December 2014, and the developers say they have received good response from businessmen interested in the app.

Goopta is first to admit that not all opinions can be neatly quantified. Emotion is often nuanced. He says: "The Opinio can be a useful tool for businesses to understand their market, but often what users write on social networks is not what they really think." *Stéphane Huët*



the process," says Prabhat Man Shrestha, designer of Apps Jhola which makes it easier for developers to find a market and increase the user base while users can conveniently find home-grown apps.

"We are not competing with Play Store, we are just trying to provide an alternative to Nepali app developers and users," says Shrestha. The app works only in android smartphones, and is not available in Google Play Store. Users will have to log in to the Apps Jhola website to download it, and just like a Google account is required for Play Store, users will have to open an account for Apps Jhola. While users can register for free, developers have to pay Rs. 1000 for a developer's account after which all they need to do is upload their app and cite the price in both Nepali rupees and US dollars. The app will then be available for users to download on their desktop through the website and on android device through the Apps Jhola app.

Apps Jhola currently has over 60 apps in 15 categories. "The apps are screened for security and only good quality apps are uploaded," said

Shrestha. The team is also planning to add paid apps in future, the payments for which can be made through local payment gateways. "There are good Nepali apps available for a nominal price and now users can buy them through Apps Jhola, using local online payment services like Esewa and

MoCo," says Shrestha. For paid apps, Apps Jhola will get 30 per cent of the total cost for each download.

With developer's account fees, revenues from featured apps and in the future shares from the paid apps, the team seems confident about staying afloat. "Of course revenues are important and with Apps Jhola it's not just us who profit, the developers will benefit from it too," says Shrestha.

Sahina Shrestha

Nepali Play Store

When you have too many apps, you need an app to navigate them. That is exactly what Google Play Store tries to do, and its Nepali avatar, the appropriately named Apps Jhola has come out with an innovative new app for Nepal's growing number of smartphone users.

In Nepal, developers face problems in distributing their apps to global market place like Google Play Store due to lack of online payment channels. And searching Play Store for Nepali apps can make you dizzy. In order to facilitate domestic app developers and users alike, Semicolon Developers Network has come up with a perfect solution: Apps Jhola, an online marketplace for Nepali android apps. The developers have to pay \$25 to release their app through the Play Store. "Although money may not be an issue, the lack of international payment gateways in Nepal hinders

When Sibjan Chaulagain visited his home village in Sindhuli, he realised that most farmers were not fully equipped with the knowledge to sustain their agrarian livelihoods and were exploited by traders. Seeing the scope of a platform to facilitate information exchange between farmers and traders, Chaulagain, along with fellow engineering student Avinash Jha, came up with the concept of IFA Krishi.

The Android app provides information on crop and animal diseases, organic and chemical fertiliser requirements, updated market information on pricing and weekly weather forecasts. Furthermore, it allows farmers to submit queries regarding their problems to experts from the agricultural sector.

The concept of IFA Krishi was initially developed as an SMS system and was tested out in a CEAPRED-ICIMOD led 'Climate Smart Village' in Kavre among 500 farmers, where they registered their crops

Farming it out

in the SMS database. The content for the SMS system was sourced from the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC) and the information could be retrieved by sending a SMS code. Although farmers were trained on SMS reading and writing, the limit on the number of characters for each SMS posed as a hindrance.

"The web app was built with an interactive interface and is more user-friendly. The content is presented in English and Nepali and has an in-built immediate inquiry system where farmers can upload pictures of their crops and submit their problems, which will then be answered by experts from NARC," says Chaulagain.

Since farmers and traders would not be aware of market rates, the app has regularly updated information on the buying price and selling price of crops. The app currently only receives rates from markets in Sindhuli, Banepa and Baneshwor.

However, one of the biggest challenges for the duo is to convince farmers to make the switch from regular mobile phones to smart phones. Each farmer is given an ID and security code on registration where they would have to pay a subscription fee of Rs 10 per month. For now, most fees are covered by NGOs and cooperatives assisting their villages. "We want to collaborate with them so that the farmers see the benefits of smart phones and subscribe to our services on their own," Chaulagain says.

Apart from revenue from the subscription fees, ICT plans on working with agro seed and feed providers collectively as well as services such as Hello Paisa to facilitate online transfer of money between different stakeholders in the agricultural sector. They plan to take it a step further too and discuss with mobile phone companies to preinstall their app on their phones and market it as a 'Krishi phone'.

Jha says: "We want to become the medium to connect NARC with the farmers. Farmers are able to access information easily and NARC can reach out to the farmers through us."

Ayesha Shakya



ENNNING IN NEPAL

Hamro Sajha

Since partially revamping its services, Sajha has shown that modern bus rapid transit is possible in Kathmandu. In a city notorious for unreliable and congested vans and three-wheelers, Sajha's green buses are a sight for sore eyes with its proper ticketing system, automated doors, passenger load limit, CCTV cameras, display screens and even Internet services. All that was missing was the ability to see in a smartphone app how long it will take for the bus to arrive at a stop.

Enter Raj Kumar Shrestha, Rajiv Shrestha, Rupesh Karki and Nhurendra Shakya of Luniva Tech with their 'Hamro Sajha' app. The team noticed that commuters didn't know how long they had to wait because buses were stuck in traffic. Now, passengers with smartphones can open a map of the route and small moving icons will show you the bus number, its location and approximate time to the next stop -- all in real time.



"Instead of waiting for the bus to arrive, passengers can now plan ahead and match their timings with the buses," says Rajiv Shrestha, "this saves a lot of time and hassles."

For now, tracking is available for two buses of Lagankhel to New Bus Park route and the coordinates for two more buses of Kalanki Sajha to airport route is currently being taken. The plan is to put geolocators on all 16 buses currently operating.

A beta version of the app is available on Google's Play Store and the company is currently collecting feedbacks from passengers. If all goes well a public release is planned for 1 January. The app will also be available for iOS and Windows platform in the future and users can also receive information on the buses from their desktops and laptops as well.

The company is also testing an automatic public announcement system that will give an audio notification of the name of the bus stop.

Sahina Shrestha



A byte of Nepal

Out of 457 start-up ideas that participated in the Ncell App Camp Competition last month, one that stood out was Bhanchna that allows office workers with smart phones to source lunch from family kitchens in the vicinity.

The app allows demand and supply to meet – demand for food and supply available with homes in the neighbourhood. Although it is still in its test phase, Bhanchna will be welcomed widely by Kathmandu office-goers as well as families looking for extra income.

When Manish Shrestha's father got confused about the Mha Puja ritual last year, he joked that his son should make a mobile phone application to make it easier for people to get details of festivals. But the remark triggered an idea, and Shrestha developed it at Startup Weekend Kathmandu in September. The resulting app, Ritirwaj, was the winner in the Education category of the Ncell App Camp last month.

"Our calendar is filled with one festival after another and most of the time we don't even know why we are celebrating it or the procedures involved. Every ritual and festival has a reason behind it, and people have forgotten that," explains Shrestha.

Shrestha's team of five are hard at work researching Nepali rituals to provide contents for the app. "Due to migration people from the same community celebrate the same festival differently. We will try to include the original process and for that a lot of research is necessary," says Shrestha.

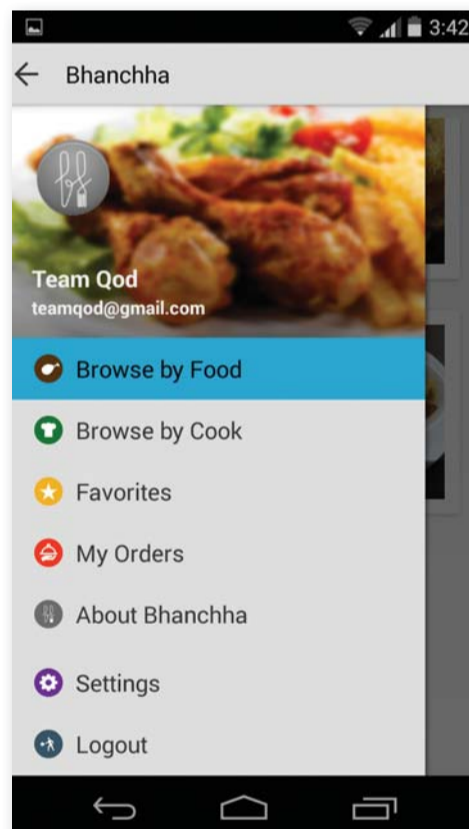
Ritual hotline

The app will have the details including photos and videos of the festival, process involved and materials required for calendar events and personal events. Calendar events include festivals like Dasain and Tihar while personal events include rites and rituals from birth to death.

While the text will be free, the rest will be in-app purchases. Users can also purchase a complete package of materials required for any rituals through the app. "This way people don't have to worry about any missing materials and the delivery will be free too," says Shrestha.

A Beta version of the app will be available for android platforms on 1 January. In the first phase the app will only be available online, although an offline version is also planned. The team is also planning to make the app available in local languages apart from English and Nepali. Says Shrestha: "Since the rituals are local, the more localisation, the better."

Sahina Shrestha



Bhanchna is an idea of five university students led by Ashish Acharya, a senior computer student from the Pulchok Engineering College and is based on the 'dhaba' lunch network in Mumbai, only this is done through the mobile internet.

"Pretty much anyone can provide the food on our platform," said Acharya, "from housewives to restaurant owners, anyone who is interested in cooking and has time." After their first step, they have contacted some chefs around New Road to establish individual profiles of amateur chefs.

Since many chefs may not have access to the internet, they are building an SMS system that automatically sends out SMS message to amateur chefs as soon as an order is made on the app.

As for the delivery, Acharya and his team provide two solutions. "The chefs can deliver by themselves, or when we grow bigger we can hire our own deliverymen," Acharya explains.

The team is just on its fourth year in college, and plan to spend the new year developing the business plan and launch in early 2015.

Elaine Wang Yiwei

Following the script

When Rohit Man Amatya visited Sri Lanka earlier this year, the signs in Sinhala befuddled him. This was when he realised that the situation must be same for tourists visiting Nepal. That was how the idea for a new app, Lipi (Script) was born.

A foreign land not only means exotic experiences and food, it also means navigating a while new culture and language. If you are a polyglot, language shouldn't be a problem but for mere mortals, the task can be daunting.

Amatya's team included Rupak Raj Ghimire, Ujjwal Devkota, Shalil Awaley and Milan Thapa and although Lipi may look simple (take a picture of any text using a phone camera), the app will translate it from Nepali to English and vice-versa.

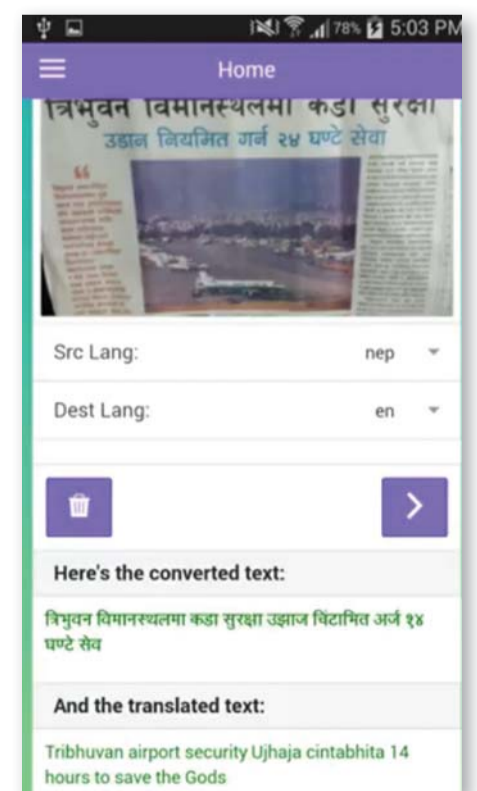
Lipi uses two technologies, an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Machine Translation to provide translated texts for the images and

uses Google Translation as its primary machine translation and Tesseract OCR engine. "The translations are not yet hundred per cent accurate, but it does provide the nearest match," Amatya says.

The team is planning to launch a Beta version on the first week of February. "We will collect feedback for the first three months, improve it and then have a public release," Amatya said, adding that the app will be available only on Android Play Store for the first phase and iOS users will have to wait a few more months for it to be available on their devices. For the time being, only ten translations per day will be available for free. If users want more, they either need to upgrade to premium or wait for another day.

Lipi will be useful to tourists visiting Nepal and Nepalis studying, working or sight-seeing abroad.

Sahina Shrestha



EVENTS

2015 Calendar



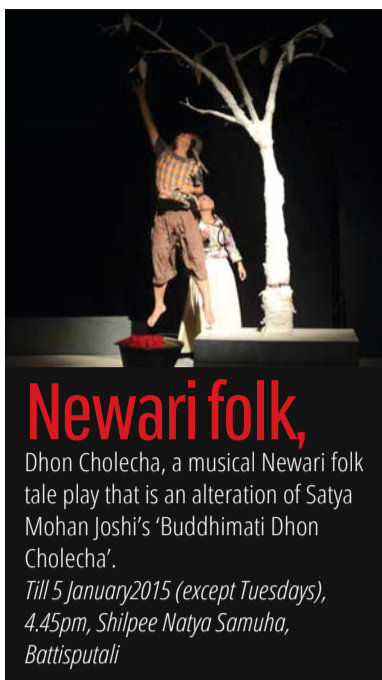
9-31 January: AFC Asian Cup
17 January - February 8: Africa Cup of Nations in Equatorial Guinea

19 February: Democracy Day in Nepal
21 February: Sherpa Losar
14 February - 29 March: Cricket World Cup, Australia and New-Zealand
14 April: Nepali New Year
24 - 26 April: 5th Nepal Tattoo Convention
15 - 16 May: Rootdown festival at Alliance Française of Kathmandu
5-16 June: Southeast Asian Games
13 - 25 October: Dasain
4 - 10 November: Jazzmandu Festival
11 - 13 November: Tihar

Anniversaries

60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal
 200th anniversary of Nepal-Britain relations

11 February: 25 years since Nelson Mandela walked for freedom
24 April: Bicentenary of Gurkha recruitment into British Army
25 May: 60th anniversary since Kangchenjunga was first climbed by Joe Brown and George Band
August: 70th anniversary of first atomic bombs dropped
24 October: 70th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations



Newari folk,

Dhon Cholecha, a musical Newari folk tale play that is an alteration of Satya Mohan Joshi's 'Buddhimati Dhon Cholecha'.

Till 5 January 2015 (except Tuesdays), 4.45pm, Shilpee Natya Samuha, Battisputali

Malini,

A charity theatre show of Rabindranath Tagore's Malini to support Nepal Critical Care Development Foundation in getting essential medical supplies.

Rs 500, 15 January, 4.30pm to 6pm, Theatre Village, Lajimpat,

Art Market,

A place to sell and buy art in the form of paintings, prints, posters and design products, with a live gig by Cadenza Collective.

3 January, 12 to 3pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (0)1 5006665, contact@image-ark.com

Cheers talk,

Subhash Ghimire, new editor at Republica and the youngest of a broadsheet daily in Nepal is the guest of the 31st session of Cheers Talk.

Rs 100, 3 January, 3.30 to 5pm, DECC Hall, 4th floor of United World Trade Center, Tripureswor, 9841-771010, cheersnp@gmail.com

Critique session,

An invitation to artists to present portfolios and projects to be critiqued by Regina Hofer, MA University of Bonn and Dr Nobert M. Schmitz, Mathesius Kunsthochschule, Germany.

Siddhartha Art Gallery, 3 to 4 January, 12pm to 4pm, nischali.oli@gmail.com, sanj33p@gmail.com, 9849519933, 9860308874

KJC Winter Camp,

A five-day workshop for the 5 to 12 years old with vocal training, playing instruments, drama, recording at studio and outdoor such as hiking and social awareness tour.

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, 5 to 9 and 12 to 16 January 2015, 10.30am to 4.30pm



Ultra trail race,

Run an ultra distance trail race around the northern hills of Kathmandu starting at the Shivapuri National Park.

3 January, Shivapuri National Park, More information and registration: www.ultratrailkathmandu.com, info@trailrunningnepal.org



Little Picasso,

An art workshop for the school-going student to enhance their sensitivity towards observational and imaginary skills.

Rs 3,500, 2-11 January, Artudio, Swayambhu, 9851180088, artudio@hotmail.com

#Occupy,

A collection of art objects with global conscience.

Till 7 January, 10am to 6.30pm, The City Museum Kathmandu, Darbar Marg

Indo-Nepal relations,

A talk on India-Nepal Economic and Cultural relations by Ashish Sinha, First Secretary of Commerce Wing and Director of Indian Cultural Relations in Nepal.

3 January 2015, 1pm to 3pm, Bridgewater International College, Sinamangal, : (1)2299527, aidia.asia@gmail.com

Forum for freedom,

The 3rd Asia Liberty unites friends of freedom from over 30 countries and provide a unique opportunity to interact with intellectuals, think tank leaders and freedom champions who work to improve the climate of discussion for rational market-based economic policies and good governance in Asia.

8-10 January, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, www.acenetwork.asia/alf2015, srijan@ccs.in, manogya@samridhi.org



Barista lavazza,

The newest addition to the Valley's European inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich. *Jawalakhel*

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दैनिक उपहार

१ जनालाई टि-सर्ट, जोपीकृष्ण हलको मुभी टिकट र साङ्गीतिक सिडी

साप्ताहिक उपहार

१ जनालाई Seiko Chronograph घडी

मासिक उपहार

४२" एल ई डी टी.भी

पक्का उपहार

१ वर्ष वारेन्टी

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Lal Durbar Restaurant,

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Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, (01)4248999, reservation@laldurbar.com

MUSIC



Underground GIG,

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7 February, 1 to 6pm Purple Haze, 9803719781

Wave Tour,


A series of concerts across Nepal to mark the 20th anniversary of Wave magazine. Prices to be announced, from 17 January, Kathmandu, Pokhara, Chitwan



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CREO/R001



Citing the seminal realist filmmaker Robert Bresson, Olivier Assayas, the talented French director is rigorous about depicting life as is, with all its fascinating minutiae.

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Almost always writing his own scripts, this fairly prolific director jumps from subject to subject, hardly ever repeating his themes. In his latest, incredibly brave new film “The Clouds of Sils Maria” which premiered earlier this year at the Cannes film festival, we have something of an anomaly. This is a cool clever script that

becomes a fascinating puzzle of a film, hard to decipher even days after viewing, meant perhaps to be an enigmatic portrait of a woman growing old, albeit gracefully. The film stars the wonderful Juliette Binoche as Maria Enders, a very famous A list star who is oblivious of vile internet celebrity culture, but understanding of the current Hollywood zeitgeist which deems actresses unemployable after 40 (or earlier). The plot is seemingly simple, Maria is travelling with her assistant Valentine (Kristin Stewart) in Switzerland, on her way to a ceremony that is celebrating the achievement of Wilhelm Melchior who wrote “Maloja Snake” - a now famous play that is about the intense love affair between an older powerful woman and a younger manipulative girl who quickly learns to wield her

influence on her lover. Maria had starred as the younger girl when the play first opened, a role that catapulted her into fame. During the journey, Wilhelm is found dead near his alpine home in Sils Maria, and Maria herself wrought with grief, finds herself in an existential dilemma when she is approached to play the older woman in “Maloja Snake” for a commemorative show for Wilhelm. She agrees only to find herself detesting the psychology behind the older woman’s character, struggling to find a kernel of empathy, helped by her faithful Valentine during painful rehearsals. As Maria deals with her own issues of insecurity, her relationships with Valentine, and Jo-Ann Ellis (Chloë Grace Moretz), who is cast as the younger woman, continue to be the crux of the film’s mystery as roles blur, people manipulate each other (or not), and nothing is quite as it seems. A true film of the art-house “The Clouds of Sils Maria” is compelling viewing, with Binoche at her best. Stewart, as always is a bit wooden, very American in her delivery and her persona, though oddly watchable in a role written for her by Assayas. Moretz too, a previously talented actor, falters in her role as the spoilt ingénue, her character too thinly written, her antics just too shallow to be real. Despite these slight lapses though, this is a film to ponder over - a compelling film for our times. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



NEPAL ARMY

ARMY REUNION: Lieutenant General Rajendra Bikram Shah welcomes the Bangladeshi Army Chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, who was on a four-day official visit to Nepal, on Sunday.



DANIEL GAURAJ

ROYAL CHITWAN: Ex-King Gyanendra with his family, including daughter-in-law Himani, at lunch at Kasara Resort in Chitwan National Park on Monday.



DEVAKI BISTA

HAPPY NEW LHOSAR: Gurungs dressed in traditional attire celebrate their new year on the streets of Kathmandu on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

NEWA UNITY: The Newars of Kathmandu celebrated Newa Unity Day on Tuesday with a parade and gathering at Basantapur.

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COLOURS OF THE NIGHT



It's been a long journey for Night since Niraj Shakya, Jason Kunwar and Ranav Birat came together in 2007, they initially played avant-garde metal. Since then, the band has evolved with different musicians. "A lot of members joined and left," says Shakya, "but today Night is a direct result of their contributions."

While travelling across Nepal for his job, Jason Kunwar discovered the richness of Nepali music. Coming back to Kathmandu, he wanted to widen the artistic borders of Night. "With my new interest in traditional music," he says, "we started producing contemporary

music with classical Nepali instruments."

Night hasn't changed members since 2012. "We feel we've reach a confident phase during these last two years," comments Niraj Shakya. During this period, the band recorded songs in studio and a few of them have been released via digital downloads. They also began the project 'Know your instrument' to present the endangered instruments of Nepal via short documentaries.

This year, Night finally comes with a hard copy of Ani Ukali Sangai Orali after signing to Subsonic Roots, a London-based record label run by Nepalis. This tribute to the mosaic of



COVER ART BY BIJAY POKHREL

Nepali music is defined as 'new-school folk music' by the band members. Indeed, Night gives a refreshing vibe to the Nepali music scene.

The debut album shows that Night actually know their instruments. Up to 24 are played on 'Ani Ukali Sangai Orali' and most of them being recorded in modern settings for the first time.

But Night isn't just instruments. Singer Sumnima Singh amazes as she easily shifts from low tones to high-octaves. Her voice fits well with Jason Kunwar's timbre to weave in the masterfully arranged compositions.

The whole makes 'Ani Ukali Sangai Orali' an album that is close to perfection. The emotion that lies in 'Tuina Ko Cha Hai Bhara' is a good example. One could only regret the fretless bass isn't more present in Night's new-school folk.

Through the lyrics, Night also pays tribute to the harsh life of villagers they have met while moving around the country. The title track (meaning 'With the climb, the descent') alludes to the daily experience of Nepalis climbing up and down the rural hills.

The short and powerful 'Sunko Jutta' (Gilded shoes) is a reference to the steady rise of Nepalis going to the Gulf in search of a better future, but who return home in boxes.

Like the getaways in remote regions of the country have helped its composition, 'Ani Ukali Sangai Orali' is an exploration, a journey traditional Nepali music unveils with fresh hitherto unheard sounds. 🇳🇵

Stéphane Huët

Manny's

What do Charlie Chaplin, tapas, siu mai, and Thai food all have in common? Manoj Basnet, better known as Manny, leaves us stumped. His newly opened, self-dubbed restaurant in Jawalakhel is an ambitious eatery and tapas bar with just too much on its plate.

Divided into four sections: 1) an outdoor garden with a big-screen projection for silent films and sports, 2) a formal dining area, 3) a coffee terrace and 4) lounge and dance floor, Manny's resembles a hotel lobby and an executive member's club designed without a general theme. As for its menu, Manny's eclectic tastes carry through.

The concept of tapas is not foreign to the Nepali palate. Tapas are snacks that dance well in a chew-and-quench number. Manny's offers diverse savory



bites like crispy buffalo wings and Chinese dumplings or siu mai. Patatas bravas is a classic Spanish snack composed of roasted potatoes lathered with a tomato-mayo sauce. But Manny's version is roughly an aloo sandeko served with a mayo dip.

For repast, the tequila-marinated chicken is a letdown. The idea of meat simmering in an intoxicating sauce sounds exotic

and appealing. But like the vodka shrimp penne at Roadhouse Café, it's a foolish faux pas. The chicken, presented like lamb-chops, was dry and overcooked. Shame on me.

The highlight on the menu, which miraculously summons back to last week's request, is the Philly Cheese Steak Sandwich. Done right, but needs just a tad more cheddar, the sandwich is a toasty, buttery baguette (so rare)

lined with perfectly cooked strips of steak and is definitely worth the visit.

Ultimately, the 'Continesian' options at Manny's renders more confusion than 'non-fusion'. The trend in the dining industry to go international is an unfortunate one and should be left up to food courts and IHOPs. With Chinese, Mexican, Spanish, Thai, Japanese, Italian, American, and French

dishes to choose from, Manny's is overwhelming. At the very least, as Manny says, the menu is momo-free (but like any 'good business', they're flexible, he adds). 🇳🇵

Marco Pollo

South from the roundabout in Jawalakhel turn right into Shaligram Hotel and Apartments. This review is a reprint of the original that was printed in #567.

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B for Barley

Barley (*Jau* in Nepali) may be Nepal's most important crop culturally, but is being consumed less food these days.



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

From babyhood when our mothers fed us barley water during illness to drinking scotch in adulthood, barley has stood us in good stead. In many villages in the Himalayan region, instant noodles have replaced tsampa (roasted barley) as a staple diet, chiefly due to ease of preparation. This is unfortunate because the health benefits of barley are numerous.

It is a rich source of B vitamins and micronutrients, eases bowel movement, and also helps regulate blood glucose levels. There is also some evidence that consuming barley over a long period may help to decrease blood cholesterol.

The only downside is that like wheat and rye, barley contains gluten which makes it an unsuitable grain for consumption by those with Coeliac disease.

A recent article in the journal *Science* has shown that barley may be the reason why human habitation was possible in places as high as 4700m on the Tibetan plateau. Unlike other grains like rice and wheat, barley grows more easily than in these higher altitude areas.

The article co-authored by Chen Fahu and Dong Guanghui from Lanzhou University in



China suggested that even when the climatic conditions became colder, it was possible to grow barley at high altitude in Tibet. Paleontological data (data from fossils) shows that humans have been living at high altitude in the Tibetan plateau since about 20,000 years ago. (This is in sharp contrast to high altitude human habitation in South America which is estimated to be about 6000 years old.)

After examining 53 sites in the north east part of the Tibetan plateau, what became clear to investigators Chen and Dong was that human settlement did not happen above 3000m for a long time. People did go up to higher altitude areas (above 3000m) in search of game such as goats, sheep, ass, and yaks, but no one settled permanently in these higher reaches.

It was only after the Tibetans

started growing barley that settlement became possible. Barley arrived in Tibet by way of the Middle East around 3600 years ago where this grain had already brought about a farming revolution. In fact the Chinese study revealed almost a crucial contour line in these 53 sites designated by the kind of crop that was grown. Those above a certain contour line are dominated by barley and below that line is dominated by millet.

Many of us who have trekked in the Everest region know that at altitudes as high as 4300m (in Dingboche on the route to Everest), we can see both buckwheat (Phapar) and barley growing. But higher up, if grain plantation was carried out, it is only barley that grows successfully.

With its ability to grow in high altitude, under extreme weather conditions and the range of nutritional benefits it possesses, barley is a valuable crop that will continue to provide both physical and spiritual sustenance to the people of the Himalaya.

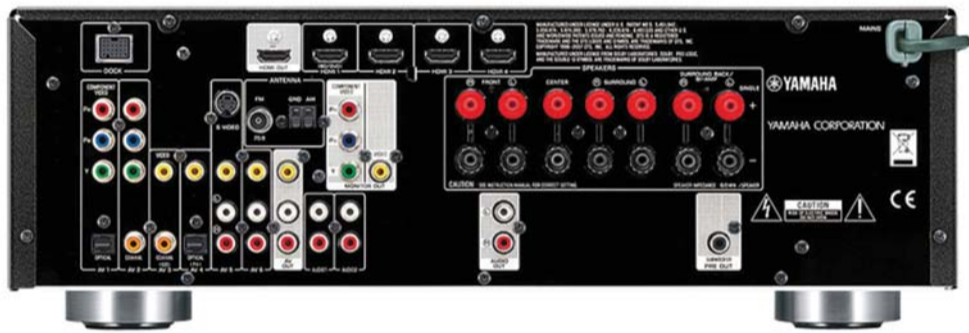
GIZMO by YANTRICK

Sound of theatre

Your new gigantic 3D TV sits in the middle of your room, movies and games look awesome, but there is something missing. The audio is a let-down. The sound from the TV is flat and bass is non-existent, and what could have been a great cinematic experience remains only a visual treat. Enter the Yamaha RX-V567 AV receiver.

Reassuringly solid in build, and sporting a piano black finish, the Yamaha RX-V567 boasts a classic AV receiver design, and is capable of producing 7.1 channel surround sound at 90 watts per channel, resulting in thundering explosions that is sure to rile your neighbors.

As far as general audio performance goes this Yamaha AV receiver stays up pretty close with the leading competition. The frequency response is nice and broad, and movie monologues sound



clear, while music is crisp and bass is also plentiful. Keep in mind that this is only a receiver, meaning you have to buy the speakers and woofer to accompany the 7.1 system separately.

The Yamaha RX-V567 AV receiver has a nice balance of connectivity options. There are the basics like AM and FM radio, two optical inputs,

two coaxial inputs, two component inputs and one output, the usual group of composite AV inputs and outputs for non-HD purposes and then a set of HDMI ports. The HDMI is version 1.4 and is 3D Ready. However, you need to install a firmware to relish the 3D capabilities. There are 4 HDMI inputs and one output, which should

cover your basic HD needs. Those, along with the other ports, are all on the back side of the AV receiver. On the front side there is a section of AV ports as well. On the far left side there is a 6.3mm headphone jack for solo listening, a 3.5mm jack for your portable devices, and a single set of composite ports for video and stereo audio.

The Yamaha RX-V567 supports Dolby Digital Plus, Pro Logic IIx, EX and TrueHD, while on the DTS side of things, it supports DTS Neo: 6, ES, 96/24 and HD Master Audio. Although the Yamaha RX-V567 does not come with the option for Bluetooth connections, it has an adaptor, and also an iPhone/iPod dock is available for all Apple users.

If you want the complete home theater experience, then a capable receiver such as the Yamaha RX-V567 is a must.

Yantrick's Verdict: A must-have gizmo for those finicky about their audio quality. Retails at approx Rs 45,000.

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Time to grow up

We have already lost decades in stalled development, we don't need messy politics to compound the problem

Professor Angus Madison's *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* is considered as one of the most comprehensive works of economic history. It provides rich insight into global patterns of growth and demography in the last millennium.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

From the fall of the Empires to the rise of modern nation states and expansion of international trade and commerce, the book gives us a broad picture and trajectory of global human development.

Madison sifts through data and show us how Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan were able to achieve rapid growth compared to rest of the world. Similarly, he attributes the dramatic rise of economies including South Korea, China, Malaysia, Botswana, Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore to their sustained high growth rate

in the last three decades of the millennium (1965-1995).

What hits us most is the realization that south Korea, Taiwan and Singapore were at about the same level of development as Nepal way back when, but leap-frogged due to leadership, cohesive politics and good governance.

To be sure, in the six decades since we opened up to rest of the world, Nepal made dramatic progress socially and politically. From being plagued by illiteracy, disease and high rates of maternal and child mortality, Nepal made impressive progress since 1990 reducing mortality and illiteracy and transitioning into a democratic republic.

However, this achievement has not resulted in improvement in overall quality of life, as both our people and economy remain stunted. The political and energy crisis are feeding into one another to create a vicious cycle, forcing industries and business to shut down, and making farmers abandon their land. Lack of jobs has resulted in exodus of manpower.

At a discussion at Martin Chautari this week, Planning Commission member Swarnim



Wagle pointed out that with 40 per cent of country's population between 16-40, we can either reap youth dividend or set off the demographic timebomb. Wagle said the classic excuse of geography as destiny does not necessarily explain Nepal's failed development. "While landlockedness is a handicap, the bigger problems lie at institutional level," he said, "if we can overcome these, Nepal's geopolitical location between the two

fastest growing economies offer huge potential."

Indeed, as Wagle points out, ours is a problem of rent-seeking mindset where politicians are used to scribbling a project plan literally in the back of an envelope and passing it on to the planning commission for execution. A country which keeps big chunk of its workforce out of its own economy is actually killing its own potential.

Wagle went on to argue why

he is against the fashionable demand to scrap the National Planning Commission. Instead, he wants the NPC to scrap its Soviet-style periodic planning model.

"We are done building bridges and approving ministerial programs, let's leave that to local bodies," he says, "our job now must be to streamline longer-term sectoral strategies in coordination with the line ministries and focus more on monitoring and evaluating the impact." Wagle feels first generation economic reforms that advocated for unrestrained privatisation will not work anymore. The new team at the NPC is still trying to diagnose what the past planners overlooked, but they seem convinced that the state needs to play stronger regulatory role, guiding economy from extractive towards inclusive growth.

By Wagle's own admission, reversing country's growing manpower flight to fuel internal growth, and putting the scattered \$6 billion remittance inflows to productive use in the interim period are the trickiest problems.

The bad news is, even if Wagle and his team manage to figure it all out, it will not be sufficient to kick-start Nepal's stalled growth. For that those pulling the political strings from Singha Durbar, Balkhu Darbar and Lazimpat Darbar must first start acting like grown-ups. And today's headline tell me that just ain't happening anytime soon. ■

Interview with Swarnim Wagle on News24 TV

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GREG WILLIS

CHANGU NARAYAN

Besides its famous Vishnu shrine, the cradle of Kathmandu Valley civilisation now has a world class museum

STÉPHANE HUËT

Looking down at Kathmandu Valley from Changu Narayan today, you can imagine what the first human settlers of this region saw: a deep blue lake fringed by steep forested hills and reflecting the snowy mountains to the north. The lake did not drain away all at once, and during the pre-Lichhavi period there was probably a smaller body

of water in the Manahara Valley to the north of Changu Hill. This is a place of antiquity, where you have to be careful not to step on religious objects and stone inscriptions scattered around the temple courtyard. The Changu Naryan temple is dedicated to Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, and was first built in 325AD and predates the Licchavi Period. It is one of the few religious sites from

that period that survives intact to this day because others were destroyed by fires, earthquakes or razed during invasions. This remarkable and sumptuously decorated double-roofed shrine is situated on a 1,540m hill which is actually the edge of a long spur that drops down from Nagarkot. The temple itself was rebuilt several times, the present structure was put up in 1702 although the stone






sculptures and ornaments are much older. Hindu devotees come here to worship Vishnu, while Buddhists pay respects to Avalokitesara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. One of the oldest inscriptions found in Kathmandu valley, dating back to 464AD is carved on a pillar (*pic, far right*) near the entrance of the temple which records that the Licchavi King, Manadeva persuaded his mother,

Rajyavati, not to commit *sati* on the funeral pyre of her husband, King Dharmadeva. It also testifies that Changu Narayan was already an important site for pilgrimage at that time, and was also an administrative centre.


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Interview with Sunita Bhadel of the Living Traditions Museum





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CHERYL MARLAND



JEAN-PIERRE DALBÈRA

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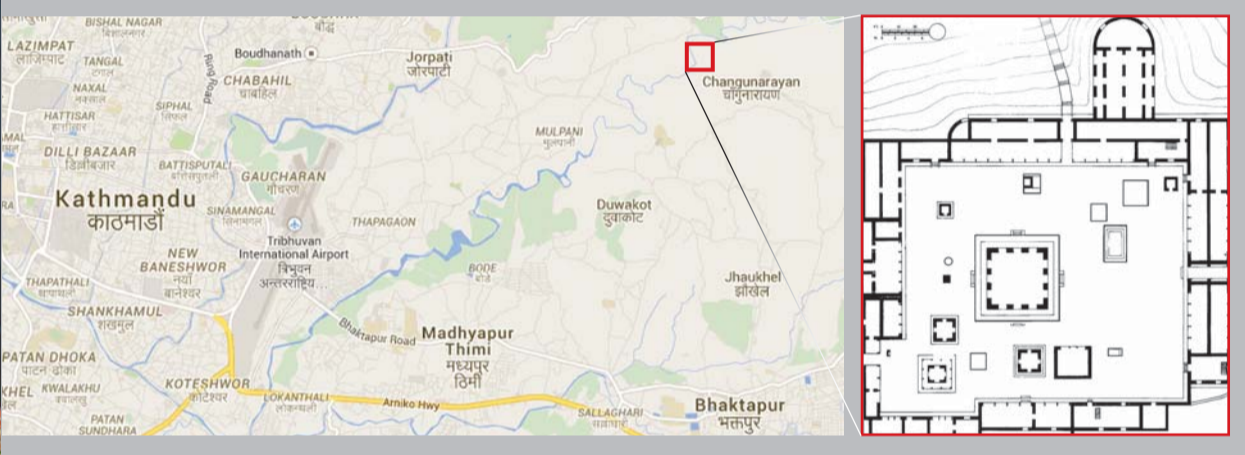
Changu Narayan has changed its name several times over the centuries. The shrine was known as Dolashikharswami during the Licchavi era, and was finally given its present Newari name during the reign of the Malla kings after 'chd' for the champak tree. Today, there are still some champaks left, but the slopes were reforested with pine during the Rana period which makes the shrine vulnerable to fires.

THE LEGEND OF VISHNU

Vishnu is one of the gods of the triumvirate who is the preserver of the universe while Brahma is the creator and Shiva is the destroyer. Most Nepalis are Shaivaites, but Vishnu is still venerated and the kings of Nepal were regarded as incarnations of Vishnu as were the gods, Ram and Krishna. The god is often seen riding his vehicle, the Garuda (*above*), or reclining on a bed of serpents, as seen in the Vishnu shrine at Budanilkantha. Vishnu is associated with light and therefore is also regarded as the sun god.



STÉPHANE HUET



HOW TO GET THERE

Changu Narayan is 20 minutes by car from Bhaktapur or turnoff from the highway to Nagarkot. The hiking trail from Nagarkot gradually descends through the terraced fields and traditional Tamang and Newari communities. Crossing villages with thatched houses, painted with ochre gives the opportunity to see rural Nepali lifestyle and architecture up close and personal. The first half of the hike is a cultural discovery, the rest of the walk offer a scenic view of the surrounding hills and the snow mountains beyond. The walk from Nagarkot to Changu Narayan is an easy hiking with relatively easy vertical gains that takes around 4h.

ELAINE WANG YIWEI



LIVING TRADITIONS MUSEUM

In 2010, the Department of Archaeology started renovating the Amatya Sattal, which was in dilapidated state. "The owner of the Sattal had neglected the building for years and nobody claimed it," says Mangala Pradhan, chief of the Monument Preservation and Palace Maintenance Office. As part of the renovation the Living Traditions Museum was set up with the first gallery opening on March 2011 to present and protect artefacts of various ethnic groups in Nepal. The Museum opened its second gallery earlier this month with a new permanent exhibition titled Changu Narayan, Now and Then Since 463.

Sunita Bhadel, 26, was born and raised in Changu Narayan. After graduating in Cultural Studies at Tribhuvan University she now manages the museum. "The village around the temple actually illustrates significant stages of Nepal, from the 5th to 17th century," Bhadel explains, "and the second gallery shows the important story of Changu Narayan and the Kathmandu Valley during the Licchavi period."

A 3m paubha mural made by Sundar Bajracharya (*left*) illustrates the mythological sites of the Kathmandu Valley during the Licchavi period. An important photographic reconstruction of the main pillar from the Licchavi period can also be seen.

The repoussé art section (*below, left*) in the second gallery was curated by James Giambrone of Indigo Gallery who says he wanted to showcase the traditional art of the Newars. This is the technique used to mould the gilt representation of Vishnu at the entrance of the temple. With the artisan Raj Kumar Shakya Giambrone has documented the 10 stages of the process.

nepalitimes.com

Interview with James Giambrone about the repoussé exhibition



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नेपाल

Rabindra Manandhar in *Nepal*, 4 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“There won’t be any agreement with those who want to turn Nepal into Rwanda, and spread ethnic turmoil in the name of identity and separate the mountains and plains.”

UML chairman K P Oli at a press conference after the party’s Central Committee meeting on 17 December. *Himal Khabarpatrika* 28 December

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“I want to be executive president”

onlinekhabar.com, 31 December

onlinekhabar.com

Answering questions on social media related to his opposition to the constitution-drafting process, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) says he doesn’t want to be a ceremonial president.

Why are you in the opposition again?

Pushpa Kamal Dahal: The CA is an institution that comes from historical movement and mandates set by citizens. Political leaders therefore have tried to agree on drafting a new constitution. The first thing that needs to be clear is that just because you have been elected and have majority doesn’t mean you can do whatever you want. When India gained freedom, they didn’t draft a constitution immediately. They went to elections, discussed and formed one through the CA. There are a certain fundamental principles including that of state-restructuring, secular state, republic federalism, inclusive and proportional representation that were agreed on beforehand. If you forget the historical agreements, there will be conflict. It is because of these principles that the country has a CA and is in the process of becoming a federal democratic republic. If we abandon these principles now, we will move back in time. Our party wants a constitution based on these principles according to the previous agreements, for that we are ready to be extremely flexible.

Why are you so adamant about the form of government?

The reason for Nepal’s political and economic instability is because we have been following a parliamentary system. The Westminster system brews extreme corruption and power struggles. For Nepal to move towards stability and economic development, it is imperative we have a stable government for at least five years. This is only possible with a directly elected president with executive powers. It isn’t like a directly elected presidential system is undemocratic. Can the US be called undemocratic then? Also, with a change in form of government, the bureaucracy can be made more efficient, transparent and corruption-free. In addition, a directly elected president will make centre stronger and unite future federal states.

If you canvas the public’s opinion, a majority of Nepalis whether here or abroad are in favor of a directly elected presidential system, they know that this can mean political and economic stability for the country. The same is true for many party members of the NC and UML. As a matter of fact, if you read the manifesto of the UML, you will see that they were in favour of this form of government. They won votes because of this, and now they have changed their stance. Even if we are flexible on federalism, we will not compromise when it comes to the form of government.

And that is a job for you?

I am not looking to be the president as such, but if there are direct elections and if the party agrees with it, I do intend to field my candidacy. If they offer me the position as it is now, I will not take it. I don’t want to be a ceremonial president. It’s not important whether I win or not, this is something that will benefit the nation and should not be compromised no matter who wins.

PRACHANDA
TIMELINE

BY BILASH RAI
HIMAL Khabarpatrika
28 DECEMBER 3 JANUARY

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका



29 AUGUST

Obstructs parliament and demands chair of High-level Political Committee

8 OCTOBER

Parliament reconvenes after NC and UML agree to Dahal’s presidency

10 OCTOBER

Declares agitation anyway

17 OCTOBER

Announces preference for agitation over High-level Political Committee

2 NOVEMBER

Urges Newars in Kirtipur to stand up for a Newa Rajya

3 NOVEMBER

Attends CPDCC meeting

5 NOVEMBER

Goes to Jhapa and obtains the Dahal genealogy

4 NOVEMBER

At meeting in Panchthar urges Limbuwan state

8 NOVEMBER

Urges Janakpur meeting to set up separate Madhes government

10 NOVEMBER

In Rolpa, revives talk of bunker warfare

14 NOVEMBER

Decides to show flexibility to forge consensus

22 NOVEMBER

Takes part in 3-party consultation

23 NOVEMBER

But next day snubs meeting

5 DECEMBER

Changes mind to forge consensus

8 DECEMBER

Top leaders meet ends in positive note

20 DECEMBER

Walks out on meeting of top leaders

21 DECEMBER

Accuses KP Oli of trying to be king

25 DECEMBER

Forms task force to address contentious issues



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Navel exercises in 2015

The year has got off to a flying start with parties sticking steadfastly to their new year resolutions to keep partying on by extending the life of the Second CA. As the year-long revelries start, we should all brace ourselves to enjoy accomplishing even less in 2015 than we accomplished in 2014.

Some parties have really got into the mood and have scheduled district, zonal and national bunds for the coming year. We can look forward to lots of do-nothing days that can be devoted to attending to personal hygiene and cleaning up our nooks and crannies. Now that 17 January and 19 January have both been declared Nepal bunds by the Dash and Cash Baddies respectfully, many of us will finally have time on our hands to extract wads of lint from inside our belly buttons which can be sold to the nation's pashmina industry to earn the national exchequer valuable foreign currency to pay for our burgeoning imports. If all of us Nepalis contribute by taking part in navel exercises in 2015, we can make this country great again.

Through trial and error over the past 50 years we have finally hit on the right formula for governance in our country: allow our rulers to goof off so they don't goof up. However, with factions and splinter groups declaring bunds left and right, there is a crying need for a coordinating body to schedule national shutdowns to avoid duplication and overlap.

The proposed High-Level National Strike Coordination Mechanism (HLNSCM) will be made up of a consortium of like-minded leaders who want the country to come to a standstill, but don't want to get in each others' way.

With most days in January already taken, the HLNSCM has announced that January 20 is the only date still open for any political force for or against federalism which wants to declare a bandh for whatever reason. The Mechanism has apologised to the public for the oversight, which means some people will have to actually go to work on that day.

But the Mechanics are taking bookings for bandhs in 2015 on a first-come-first-serve basis, and technicians are working on an app so that political parties can use smartphones to block off days when they want to get

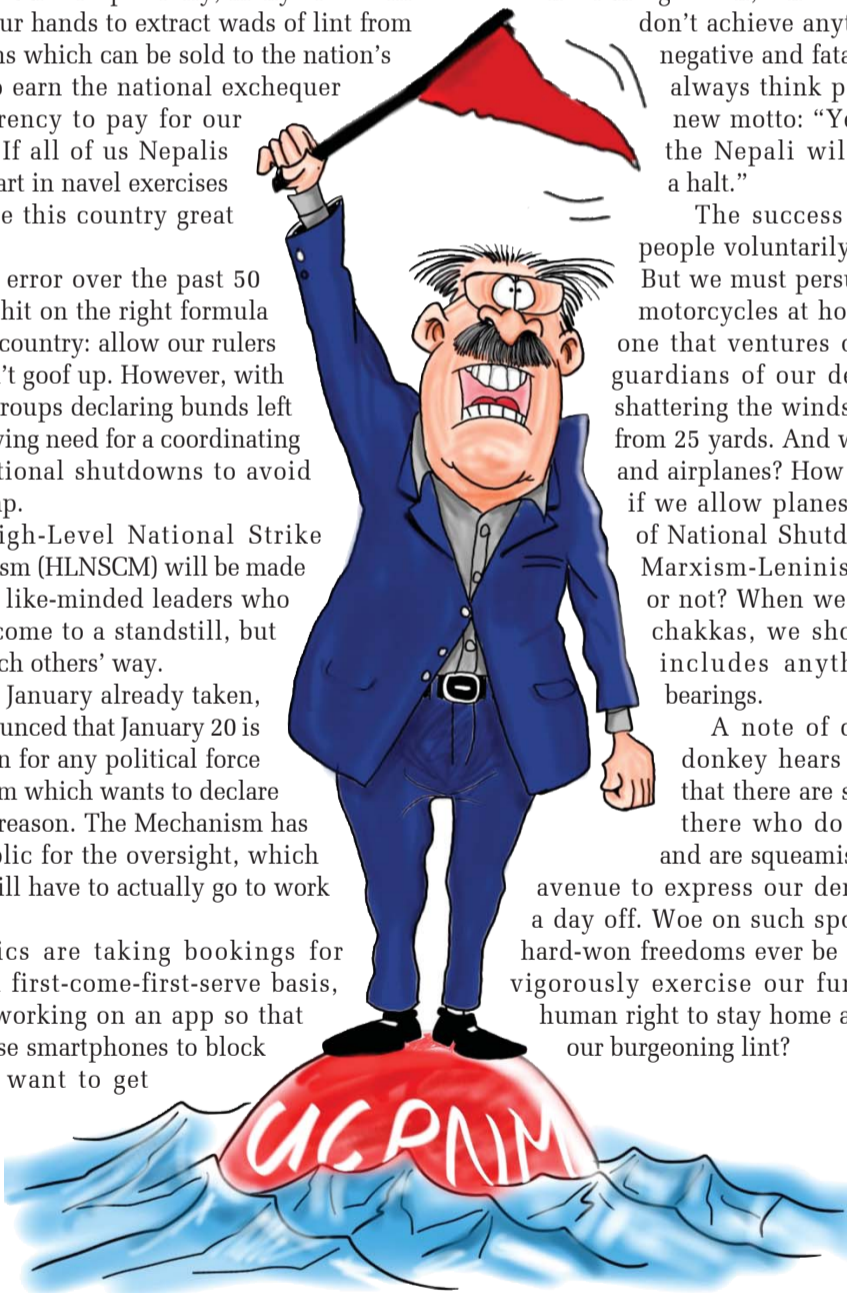
agitated, and the public can conveniently find out which days are allocated to protest a particular clause in the proposed constitution. We can also virtually set fire to a digital version of the new constitution if we can't get our hands on an actual hardcopy of the draft.

The gobblement has also come up with a cunning plan to generate revenue from bund declarations: it will auction off remaining dates in 2015 which haven't already been set aside for national strikes so that we can make the 'Totally Shutdown Nepal in 2015' campaign a grand success.

One thing we shouldn't do is give up hope. We shouldn't go: "Oh, what's the use of bunds, they don't achieve anything." That is having a negative and fatalistic attitude. We must always think positive and take up the new motto: "Yes, the Nepali can. And the Nepali will bring the country to a halt."

The success of a bandh hinges on people voluntarily keeping off the streets. But we must persuade them to keep their motorcycles at home by burning the first one that ventures out. We must train the guardians of our democracy in the art of shattering the windscreen of a speeding car from 25 yards. And who exempted rickshaws and airplanes? How can we defend freedom if we allow planes to fly around on Days of National Shutdown? Do we believe in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Vandalism or not? When we say we want to jam all chakkas, we should mean it, and that includes anything running on ball bearings.

A note of caution, however. The donkey hears through the grapevine that there are still political parties out there who do not believe in bandhs and are squeamish about using this great avenue to express our democratic desire to take a day off. Woe on such spoil-sports. How can our hard-won freedoms ever be safeguarded if we don't vigorously exercise our fundamental human right to stay home and harvest our burgeoning lint?



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

The Ass



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