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Tottering future

UNNANTURAL DISASTER
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Next week, Nepal will mark the 80th anniversary of the Great Earthquake that killed at least 17,000 people. On a sunny winter afternoon of 15 January 1934, the earth shook violently, destroying many brick houses, temples and monuments in Kathmandu. Two of King Tribhuvan's daughters were killed when the palace collapsed, 22 people inside an eatery in Patan were crushed. Water and sand shot out of the ground like geysers. Liquefaction caused the Bagmati to flood as if it was in a monsoon spate. Some children who had narrow escapes are now senior citizens, like Bhuyau Maharjan (right). But the building behind him shows we have not learnt our lessons from 1934.

- **PREPARED TO BE PREPARED**
 - **TESTIMONIES OF SURVIVORS OF 1934**
 - **NEXT BIG ONE?**
- PAGE 16-17**

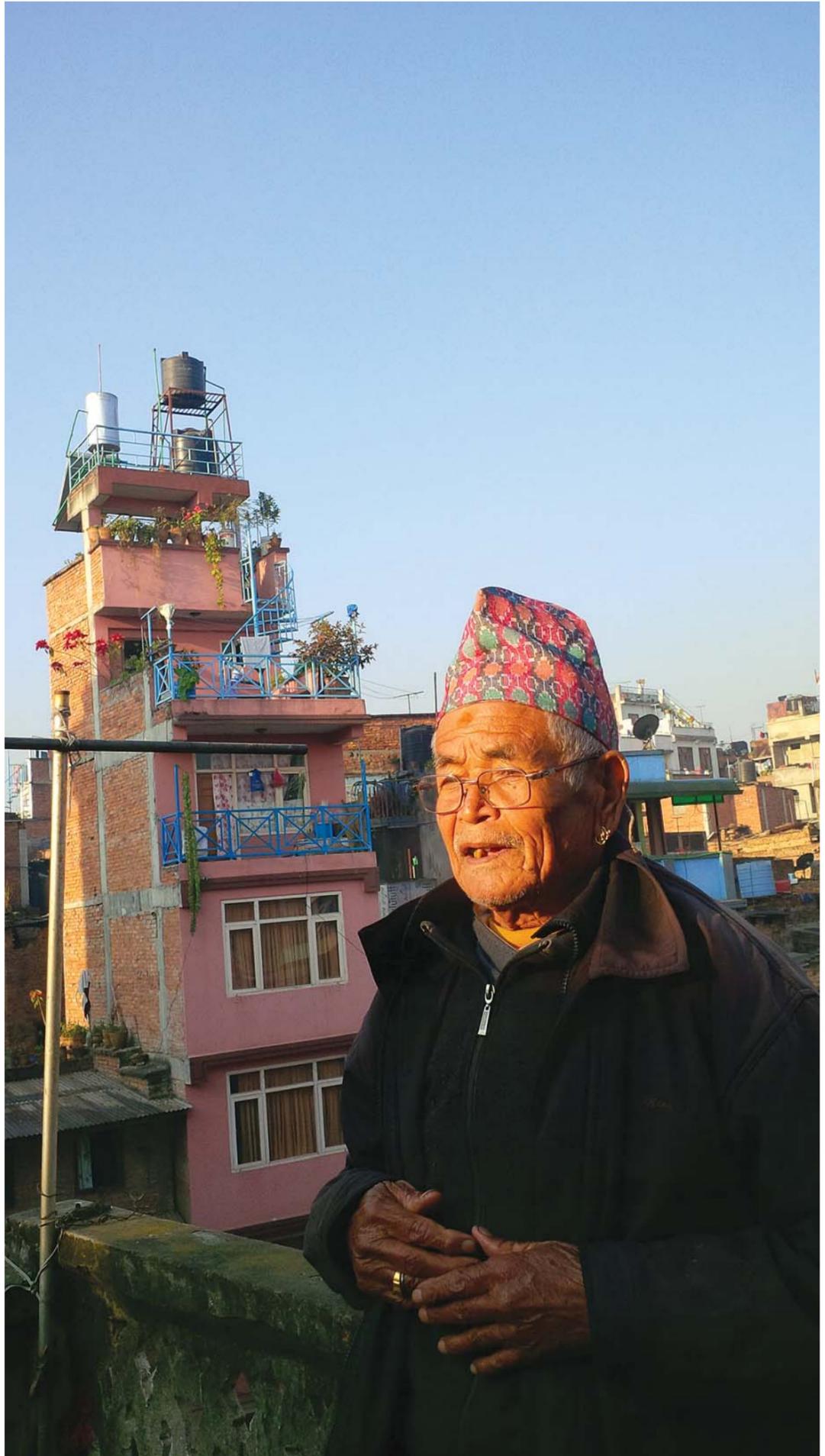
nepalitimes.com
Interactive map of earthquakes in Nepal in last 50 years



COOL CAT

A rare and endangered wild cat found in Manang is named 'Tashi' after the Nepali biologist who spotted it.

PAGE 10-11



KUNDA DIXIT

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UNNATURAL DISASTER

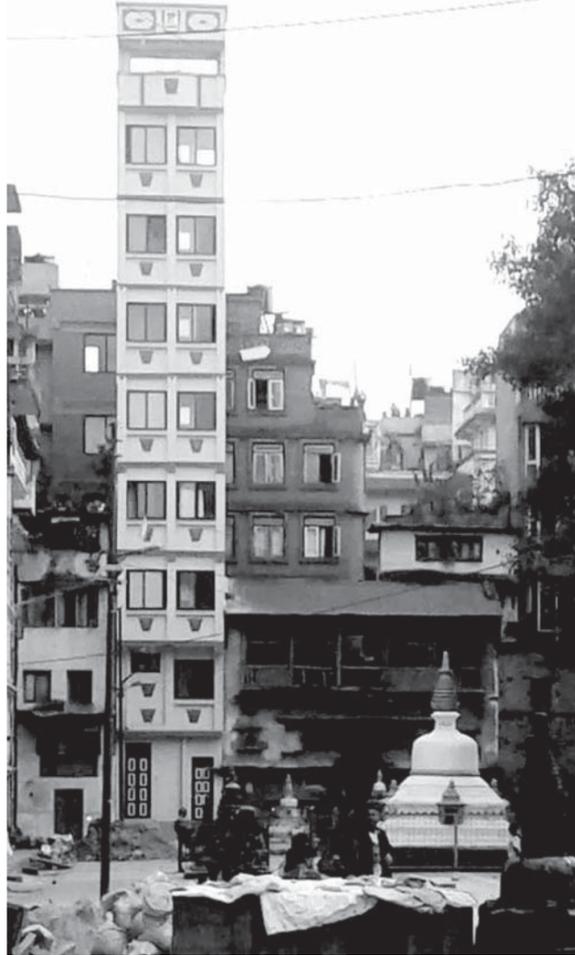
Earthquakes don't kill people, weak houses and bad planning do

Next week, Nepal will mark the 80th anniversary of the Great Earthquake that killed at least 17,000 people. On a sunny winter afternoon of 15 January 1934 the earth shook violently destroying many brick houses, temples and monuments in Kathmandu. Two of King Tribhuvan's daughters were killed when the palace collapsed, 22 people inside an eatery in Patan were crushed. Water and sand shot out of the ground like geysers. Liquefaction caused the Bagmati to flood as if it was in a monsoon spate. Some children who had narrow escapes are now senior citizens, and they tell us (page 16-17) the streets were unrecognisable, people walked on collapsed roof tiles to find their homes.

The 8.3 magnitude earthquake killed at least 8,000 people in the Valley which at that time had a population of about 200,000. The capital's population has grown to 2.5 million since, the mud brick houses have been replaced by densely packed concrete buildings. Kathmandu is ranked number one on a list of top ten cities around the world most vulnerable to earthquakes.

The death and destruction from the next Big One will be unthinkable. Earthquake experts estimate that depending on the time of day, at least 100,000 people will be killed outright. Hundreds of thousands more will be seriously wounded, but will have nowhere to go because most of the hospitals will have also collapsed. Besides, the city's narrow roads will be blocked by rubble. International relief will be delayed by damaged airports and highways.

It has been accepted wisdom that there is a Great Earthquake in Kathmandu every 80 years and the next big one is due any day. Well, if it's any comfort, Som Nath Sapkota of the National Seismological Centre tells us (page 17) that the frequency of 8 magnitude quakes is more like 500 years. The last one in 1255 killed one-third of the Valley's population, including King Abhaya Malla. There have been smaller quakes every 80-100 years, but as Sapkota says: "You don't need an 8 magnitude earthquake to destroy Kathmandu, a 7 will do just fine."



Earthquakes release tectonic tension below the Himalaya as the Indian plate pushes 2cm northwards every year, and every 500 years the rock strata snap along the Main Frontal Thrust fault that straddles the midhills. There has been no major earthquake in western Nepal for 500 years, and seismologists say that is where the next big rupture will occur. But even if an 8 magnitude quake is 800km away in western Nepal, the clay sediment of the former lakebed of Kathmandu will magnify the shaking.

Earthquakes don't kill people, weak houses and bad planning do. The haphazard and substandard new buildings in Kathmandu are ticking time-bombs like this one here (left). Earthquakes are not 'natural' disasters, they are man-made.

It may be asking too much to expect a government that can't even solve relatively minor problems like electricity, water and food supply, health care and education to prepare for an uncertain calamity in the distant future. But for Kathmandu, it's not a question 'if' a Big One will hit Kathmandu, it is 'when'. Unable to solve present crises, successive governments have been too distracted to even push through a Disaster Risk Management Act that would pave the way for a Commission to coordinate response and preparedness. Decision-making is paralysed by a turf war between the Home Ministry and the rest.

Interestingly, Nepal is further ahead than most South Asian countries in earthquake awareness work and retrofitting technology. Our Earthquake Safety in Schools campaign is regarded as a model. For now, it would be too much to expect our feckless government to help us prepare for an earthquake or its catastrophic aftermath. We must rely on municipalities to enforce compliance with building codes, communities to pre-position equipment and supplies, and individual families to have contingency plans. We need to scale up these initiatives and get institutions involved until the national government wakes up. And we don't need a new constitution to do that.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

TASKLESS FORCE

God forbid that an alliance of Madhesi, Maoist and smaller Janajati parties push their agenda on federalism based on ethnicity ('Taskless force', Editorial, #739). Nepal's national identity should be defined by our cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. We have seen the consequences of identity politics in Bosnia, Sri Lanka. In Ethiopia, as in Nepal, 'ethnic federalism' was shoved down the throats of the rulers. Animosity between Christian and Muslims immediately became a problem, although it never was before. We have seen many countries being infected by the ethnic virus, leading to massacres of minorities, opposition groups have been split through the use of ethnic 'differences'. It becomes one more pretext to eliminate the unwanted. Take heed, Nepal.

G Mishra

Dear Nepali Times, your whole idea with this editorial is to protect the 5M: Mercenaries, Mendicants, Mediators, Merchants, and Mandarins.

@Lohars5

The disputed five districts Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Kailali, Kanchanpur should be for the time being designated as central territory, and this prime hurdle removed.

Daniel Gajraj

INEQUALITY

In 2014 Nepal, there still exists one discrimination which is state sponsored, and contravenes all laws of morality and civility ('Some are more equal than others', David Seddon, #739). Not to mention criminality: Laws of citizenship where women and men have equal rights to obtain and bequeath. I appeal to the editors of all Nepali newspapers and urge all major opinion makers of this nation, to desist from chauvinistic, jingoistic posturing. Do not exclude 15-20 per cent of your population. Let them forge their own destiny on the back of a kinder, gentler Nepal. Today's stateless wo/men are tomorrow's mendicants. Have we not learnt from Hitler's Germany, Taliban's Afghanistan and ISIS' Iraq? Creating a subaltern society serves no one, petrifies everyone and radicalises someone.

Namah

You forgot to mention that in India there is a category called OBC (Other Backward Classes/Castes) who enjoy much greater proportion of Reservation/Quota than the Dalits (SC) and tribes (ST). Many Nepalis are not aware of it.

R Rai

Like most of David Seddon's writings, this too meanders around in circles, eventually going nowhere. Like a true conservative, the writer is effectively saying "Folks, sit still and don't do anything" even if the ship is sinking. At the end of the day, it is ironic that he is more worried about fictitious problems he sees in positive discrimination than the very

real discrimination marginalised people in Nepal are currently facing. Reality distortion anyone?

Tony Gurung

David Seddon replies: I am in favour of social justice which means reducing exploitation and oppression. People aren't 'marginalised', they are exploited and oppressed. I am not a conservative, there is plenty that needs doing -- the solution is not social inclusion but a genuine social transformation.

It'd be irrational if we expect that government would be running in every corner and will do everything for us ('Time to grow up', Anurag Acharya, #739). Intrinsic responsibility of every citizen will do the actual job in making the dream of prosperity a reality.

Anil Karki

All of our so-called leaders will grow old and die but will never grow up. It is a sad state for our nation that we don't have a single strong leader who thinks for the country and its citizens.

Anonymous

With 4.5 million Nepalis without citizenship documents, can you really kick start anything when 15 per cent of the population is left dangling in limbo? Let's first start with the basics. 'Streamlining', 'Line Ministries', etc. is all big talk. First, address the small talk. You are creating refugees in your own country. Don't talk

about development in Modi-esque ways, when your basic laws are so flawed a significant work force has been emasculated. But in Nepal it (the Government) does not do the minimum: water, electricity, schools, hospitals, safety.

Nam

CHANGU NARAYAN

Let me guess: foreigners will be charged \$30 entrance fee and locals Rs 30 who will carve their initials into everything ('Changu Narayan', Stephane Huet, #739). But then you will blame the foreigners.

Winter Melon

TOURISM

China: Number 1 tourist market for Nepal within a year ('The Chinese are coming', Claire Li Yingxue, #739). Have you forgotten the Indians?

N

RAPE

Rape should carry life sentences ('18-year imprisonment for father raping daughter', Briefs).

Kashish Das Shrestha

That's too lenient. The perpetrator should be fined atleast Rs 5 million and served a life imprisonment.

Sakirya

CORRECTION

The wrong version of a food review was inadvertently printed in the last issue of Nepali Times #739. The error is regretted.

THIS WEEK



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Political laxative needed by Diwakar Chettri

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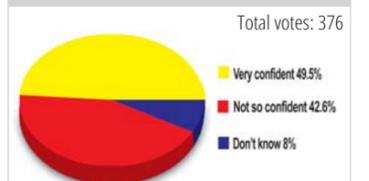
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Taskless force, Editorial (30 retweets, 10 favourites)

Most visited online page
Back to Everest in 2015 by Kunda Dixit (909 views)

Most commented
Some are more equal than others by David Seddon

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #740

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



Weekly Internet Poll #741
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should KP Oli apologise to Upendra Yadav?



Spanner in the works

OM ASTHA RAI

Negotiations to reach a consensus on the disputed issues in the draft of the new constitution have gone awry with new animosity between the UML and Madhesi political parties.

On 7 January, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala held a meeting with four major political parties to iron out differences over the basis of federalism, form of governance, electoral system and model of judiciary – the issues that have apparently become the bone of contention in the new constitution writing process.

At the beginning of the meeting the Sadbhavana Party Chair Rajendra Mahato said the Front would not compromise on its main One Madhes demand. He said the Madhesi parties would not allow the NC and the UML to exclude the five Tarai districts – Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Kailali and Kanchanpur – from an autonomous Madhes province.

To this, the UML Chair KP Oli reportedly said: "If you want the entire Tarai to be part of Madhes province, why don't you try to include Bihar and Uttar Pradesh as well?"

Oli's remark enraged the Madhesi party leaders. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) Chair Upendra Yadav left the room, saying it was an insult. He was followed by Mahato and Rashtriya Madhesh Samajbadi Party (RMSP) leader Sharad



BIKASH DWARE

UML-Madhesi dispute adds new uncertainty to constitution negotiations

Singh Bhandari.

"They left so quickly, we couldn't say anything to stop them," UML leader Bhim Rawal told *Nepali Times*.

Outside the Prime Minister's residence, Mahato told journalists: "What Oli said was offensive to us, he jeopardised all our efforts to write constitution by 22 January."

A few minutes later, Oli told the same group of journalists: "They (the Madhesi party leaders) were just looking for an excuse to run away from talks."

Hours after the four-party meeting ended abruptly, the Madhesi parties decided that they will no longer sit for talks with the UML unless Oli apologises to them.

In the evening, cadres of Madhesi political parties burnt

effigies of Oli near the Constituent Assembly (CA) building, saying the UML Chair's remark once again demonstrated his deep-seated hatred for the whole Madhesi community.

The MJF Chair Yadav told *Nepali Times* that it was not the Forum's official decision to burn Oli's effigies. "It was just a reaction to Oli's arrogant remarks," he said. "Although we will not hold any talks with the UML without Oli's apology, we will still be attending meetings with the NC and other parties."

The new animosity between the UML and the MJF has put a spanner in the works of the last-minute negotiations to agree on some contentious issues before 22 January. It looks uncertain that the CA will meet the deadline. Oli

has already made it clear that he will not apologise to Madhesi parties, meaning that there will be no reconciliation between the UML and the Madhesi parties anytime soon.

The UML-Madhesi row has emerged as the ruling parties – particularly the NC – was showing flexibility on demands put forth by the UCPN (Maoist)-led alliance. Late in the night of 6 January, the NC and the UML decided to compromise on all but the demand of ethnic identity as basis of federalism. That same night, the UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal had also briefed some of his alliance members that things were moving in a positive direction.

On 8 January, a meeting of the NC, the UML and the UCPN

MY TAKE: UML Chair KP Oli (left) and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) Chair Upendra Yadav speak to journalists after the four-party meeting ended abruptly on Wednesday.

(Maoist) decided to forward the contentious issues once again to the Constitutional Political Dialogue Consensus Committee (CPDCC). CPDCC Chair Baburam Bhattarai however said that this is not the solution.

With the UML and MJF not on speaking terms, the constitution process is almost back to square one, leaving them with only two options: either promulgate the new constitution by using the combined two-thirds strength of the NC and the UML, or extend the 22 January deadline.

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Mirage of prosperity

Nepal would be silly not to hitch her hydropower potential to the Indian grid, but conditions apply

BISHAL THAPA

A parched man traversing a great hot desert sees an oasis in the distance. Summoning the last bit of strength, he makes a dash across the dunes. He never pauses to consider if it might be a mirage. So it is with Nepal's hydropower.

Nepal has journeyed through the last decade of load-shedding and a stagnant power sector. India's electricity market has now appeared as an oasis across the southern border. Nepal has seized upon it like the desperate parched man. Perhaps we ought to pause to consider if it might be a mirage.

In October, Nepal and India signed a historic Power Trade Agreement (PTA) that had been in the making for close to two decades. Consisting of eight articles, the agreement recognises the business of cross-border power trading provides non-discriminatory access to each other's markets and creates an institutional framework for detailing the operational issues.

The agreement brings closure to a long held assertion that the absence of a cross-border PTA was stalling investment in Nepal's hydro-power. The idea has always been that the Indian marketplace is the key to hydropower in Nepal: that Nepal's bountiful rivers (particularly in the wet months) could only be tapped if we could sell it to India.

This belief stems largely from assumptions about the Indian power market that have never been challenged. India still has 600 million people living in poverty, and its imperative is not just expanding electricity supply but expanding electricity supply at affordable rates. Even as it seeks out new sources of energy to fuel economic growth, it must find ways to make electricity accessible to the vast majority of the population that will not



always have the capacity to pay for it.

Nepal must be prepared to supply power in a low value market where top dollar won't always be paid and long term power prices could consistently remain under INR 4 per unit (kWh).

Indian power markets are messy. A decade after the transformative Electricity Act 2003, which unbundled the sector, ushered in competition and opened power trading, many distribution utilities are broke. Their accumulated losses were approximately \$11.6 billion in 2011-2012 – all of that incurred within a decade of the restructuring that wiped out all previous losses.

India is now due for another round of major power sector

reforms. The Indian power market is not a monolithic whole but a patchwork with success in some pockets and dismal failure in others. Electricity in India is also a dual subject within its federal structure with both the national and state governments share jurisdiction. For instance, although the Electricity Act 2003 was passed at the national level, the states will have to implement many of its key covenants.

This poses a challenge to implementing India's PTA with Nepal. Implementation will require the engagement of states and entities that are beyond the immediate jurisdiction of the central government. Despite all its promise, the Indian power market remains challenging and few have managed to successfully navigate it. It beckons, but vexes.

Nevertheless, India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world that is desperately in need of electricity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that by the end of this decade every Indian will have 24x7 power supply. Nepal would be silly not to hitch her hydro-potential to the promise of India.

The question for Nepal is how to approach the promise of the Indian power market. It shouldn't be, as it is often these days, like the parched man crawling towards a mirage in the desert. We need a calmer, more studied approach, without desperation, recognising that the Indian market is full of paradoxes which in pockets fare no better than our own.

Exploiting Nepal's hydro potential must begin first

by flushing our minds of antiquated assumptions about India's power requirements. We must take into account our own suppressed demand, and the tariffs on both sides of the border. We must also factor in the cost regulated water.

We have already spent a decade in darkness. We can't spend the next merely chasing a mirage of prosperity from exporting electricity. 🇳🇵



ENERGY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Bishal Thapa is the vice-chair of the Energy Development Council. This is the first of a series of regular op-eds in Nepali Times by energy experts. www.edcnepal.org

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हिमाल

ग्राहक योजना

१ कार्तिकदेखि

हिमालको साथमा
उपहार हातमा



३ वर्षे

ग्राहक शुल्क रु ५२५० मा
नगद छुट रु २५०

TITAN नाडी घडी



२ वर्षे

ग्राहक शुल्क रु ३५०० मा
नगद छुट रु १५०

गोल्ड स्टार शू को
रु.१००० बराबरको गिफ्ट भौचर
र साथमा पाइलट पेन सेट



१ वर्षे

ग्राहक शुल्क रु १७५० मा
नगद छुट रु ५०

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Disaster and Development

HELEN CLARK

NEW YORK – When Typhoon Hagupit made landfall in the Philippines on 6 December, memories of Typhoon Haiyan, which killed more than 6,300 people, were fresh in people's minds. Some 227,000 families – more than a million people – were evacuated ahead of Hagupit's arrival, according to the United Nations. The typhoon, one of the strongest of the season, killed some 30 people. All deaths from disasters are a tragedy, but the fact that this number was not much higher attests to the efforts that the Philippines has made to prepare for natural disasters.

Since the beginning of the century, more than a million people have died in storms like Hagupit and other major disasters, such as the 2010 Haitian earthquake, with economic damage totaling nearly \$2 trillion. These losses are tragic, but they are also avoidable. They serve as a reminder that disaster preparedness is not an optional luxury; it is a constant, intensive process that is necessary to save lives, protect infrastructure, and safeguard development.

The argument for investing in disaster preparedness is simple. If countries expect to experience natural hazards, then investing time and resources in preparing for shocks will save lives and protect communities from other



BIKRAM RAI

losses. Unfortunately, governments often put different priorities ahead of disaster preparation. Donors have also historically funded emergency relief much more readily than pre-disaster preparedness. The measures that are implemented tend to be stand-alone and piecemeal, rather than part of a larger, systematic risk-reduction plan.

That needs to change. Countries like the Philippines continue to demonstrate the benefits of investing in preparedness, especially when done as part of a larger risk-mitigation effort. The Philippine government's quick, effective response saved many lives. But it is important to note that its efforts were not simply an overnight reaction to the oncoming storm. They were part of a national, comprehensive effort that was long in the making.

The Philippines includes preparedness as a core component in its overall strategy for reducing

disaster risk. Over the last decade, the country's authorities have raised awareness, established and strengthened disaster-management institutions, and worked on recovering from past disasters. National and local disaster plans have been improved, standard operating procedures have been developed, and early warning systems have been put in place. The end result has been nothing short of a transformation of how the Philippines reacts to disasters.

In March 2015 a new global framework for disaster reduction will be agreed in Sendai, Japan. It is crucial that delegates push for transformational change that enables preparedness and saves lives. www.project-syndicate.org

Helen Clark, a former prime minister of New Zealand, is Administrator of the UN Development Programme.

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Bacardi time

Bacardi launched two new rum flavours – the Bacardi Limon and Bacardi Apple – in Nepal on Sunday. Both the rums are priced at Rs 950 per 750ml bottle. Bacardi Superior is set to be launched in late January.



Double delight

Samsung has started a new campaign 'Samsung Clean and the Beautiful' in Nepal. Customers will now receive Samsung vacuum cleaners and L'Oréal skin care products on purchase of Samsung washing machines.

Green floors

India's largest interior infrastructure company Greenply Industries now has a presence in Nepal. Greenply India appointed SOS International as its authorised dealer to sell its popular laminated flooring Green floormax in the Nepali market.



New sets

Three new models from Colors Mobile- Z22 Spark, Z24 Glow and CG750- were released last week. The Z22 Spark and Z24 Glow are dual-sim bar-phones with a 2.4-inch QVGA screen while the CG750 is equipped with Dual-sim convenience with 1.8-inch screen and is driven by a 1500mAh battery.



New service

Bank of Kathmandu has started a new service 'Sambriddha Jeevan'. Customers above 50 will now be able to open a current account with minimum Rs 100,000 deposit and saving account with Rs 10,000.



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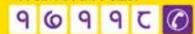
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नेपाली क्रिकेटरहरु फेरि अब्बल सावित

काठमाडौं, कार्तिक १२: डिभिजन शीको खेलमा मलेसियालाई पराजित गरी नेपाल पुनः आइसिसि वर्ल्ड कप क्रिकेट लिगा डिभिजन २ मा उक्लन सफल भएको छ ।

वर्षाले प्रभावित सो खेलमा नेपालले ४३.३ ओभरमा १४२ रन मात्र जोडे पनि डकवर्थ/लेविस्को आधारमा आयोजकलाई ३५ रनले पराजित गर्न सफल भयो । गत वर्ष नै डिभिजन २ मा उक्लन सफल भएतापनि न्यू जील्यान्डमा भएको आइसिसि वर्ल्ड कप क्वालिफायर्समा नवौं स्थानमा परेपछि नेपालले सो स्थान गुमाएको थियो ।

free news





New year, new start

There is no franchise on happiness or achievement, anyone can do it

am I and how can I tell? More people should ask this question. We have experience to help us. I can look at my deepest darkest moments, the worst of which so far perhaps I have been spared and score these times as 1 on a scale of 1 – 10. Yes you have guessed, 10 is the best we have known. So where do you sit today, and why?

I have a theory that it is as simple as this: 5 is averagely happy. Having worked this out, the really interesting part is the realisation that it does not matter who you are or what you have. If you are scoring 5 you could be doing this living on the bread line, meanwhile some 'got it all', famous media person is scoring 2. So who is winning? You only have to read the papers to see how 'messed up' some privileged people are. So we know the famous line 'money can't buy you love', could anything be more true? When I think back to my best ever times, they are also often the most frugal times. The times when we did the most with the least money.

Good times were achieved often at the expense of a 100 mile hike to the mountains and a night sleeping in a ditch, not bought. If you are married think back to when you first got married and you had very little. You cherished everything you did have, each other and those special moments.

Now you have everything and a remote control to operate it. What would you have scored then, and what today? In our better world today no one should be going backwards on the happiness scale.

Of course there are levels of achievement like levels of investment. The more you put in the more you can take out. Actually, this is just life. One of my favourite quotes is by Ives Ibsen and he says it all:

"There is always a certain element of risk in being alive, but the more alive you are the greater the risk." What did you risk today, what did you achieve? Now go look for that remote control. 📺

Ted Atkins is a former RAF Chief Engineering Officer and now partner/owner of four international companies. He writes this monthly column, Outside In, for Nepali Times.

BIKRAM RAI

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I am on the ship going back to England from Scotland where I brought in 2015. The new year really should be time of reflection, a new start. Many years ago my new year resolution took no thinking about, it was always to give up smoking.



OUTSIDE IN
Ted Atkins

When I stopped smoking in 2004, I had to think of other ways that I might improve, in other words, to achieve.

Why? This is the question I am braced for when I give lectures about climbing Mt Everest and the world's other high mountains. George Mallory said 'because

it's there'. This is nearly good enough, but when I started climbing on Everest, one person died for every ten who stood on the summit. A 'high' price to pay.

I have a one word answer: "Achievement". I could add "accomplishment" but these are very similar words. When we achieve, we feel good. We feel good about ourselves and we gain confidence. The more confidence we gain, the better we feel, the more we can achieve. So what is an achievement? Climbing Everest, yes, but I try and achieve something every day. If I help my son with his homework (and understand it) or I might make my neighbour smile. Give it a shot. Set an achievable target and do it. Achieve.

There is no franchise on happiness or achievement, anyone can do it. Now ask yourself a question: How happy

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Last week's westerly system did bring overcast skies, even a few thunder storms, and a drop in maximum temperature, but not much by way of precipitation. There is still a smaller lower pressure system trailing it which will bring some cloud cover over the mountains, but since this is bringing drier air, the Tarai fog will hopefully be less thick. In Kathmandu maximum temperature will climb to the higher teens but mornings will still be nippy with misty smog.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
18° 3°	18° 4°	18° 3°

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Nepal's most-famous comedian duo MaHa (Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya) don't just make us laugh at ourselves, they have also been known to bring empathy and healing to those in despair. During a three-month long journey across North America in late 2014 they performed more than 30 standup acts in venues in the US and Canada. The Nepali diaspora were rolling in the aisles with laughter when they performed



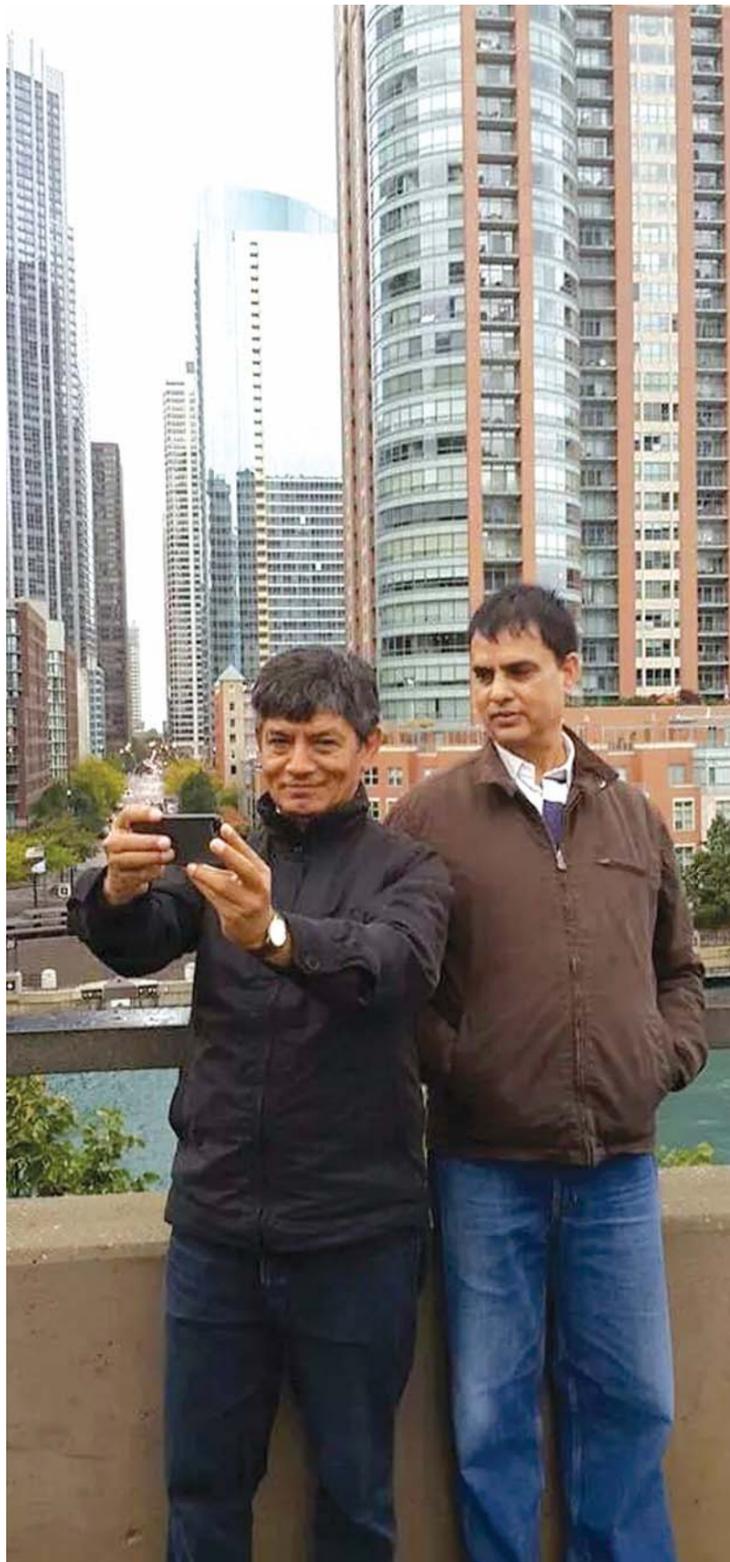
ON THE ROAD
Guna Raj Luitel

their hilarious satire on ethnic stereotypes called 'Bahun Bahadur, Newar Bahadur'. However, there were poignant reminders of the hardships at home that drove Nepalis so far away.

Just after the arrival of the first Lhotshampa in eastern Nepal in 1990 after they were chased out by the Bhutan regime, MaHa wanted to raise not just awareness about the refugees but also funds to take care of them.

One of their first satire programs was *Bigyapan*, which raised Rs 100,000 to buy basic foodstuff for refugee families in Jhapa and Morang. Some of those refugees have now been resettled in the US, Canada and Australia under an international refugee program.

One such refugee now living in Canada approached Madan Krishna and Hari Bansha after their show in Toronto and donated \$500 to a charity of their choice back home in Nepal.



"He didn't want publicity, he just told us he was returning the money for the support we provided them more than 20 years ago in the refugee camps," Shrestha recalled this week on return from the tour. Last year MaHa was greeted warmly by Bhutanese refugees settled in Australia as well.

"What was interesting was that they had never forgotten who had helped them in the past," Shrestha says.

Wherever the MaHa duo go,

whether it is in Nepal or abroad, they are welcomed wildly. Their skits and drama programs appeal to the Nepali trait of laughing at ourselves. The Brahmin-married-to-Newar and Newar-married-to-Brahmin comedian duo have a unique perspective on Nepal's ethnic relations, which has become especially important at a time when the debate on federalism is heating up.

Their charity shows these days tackle the issues of tolerance and inclusion head-on, and the two

TWICE BLESSED



can get away with much more than others because of their own backgrounds. Some have taken their apprehension about ethnic turmoil to mean that they are against federalism.

During their North America tour, there was a campaign launched by some diaspora Nepalis in New York to boycott their programs. It backfired and the two performed to packed halls.

Their own personal difficulties (Madan Krishna is battling Parkinsons and Hari Bansha lost his wife) have encouraged the two to devote even more of the proceeds of their shows these days to charity.

The two have had a philanthropic streak from the very start of their career during the Panchayat period. When firebrand journalist Padam Thakurathi was shot in 1986, the two were attending a protest rally in which various speakers were belting out platitudes. MaHa got up and announced that they would donate Rs 10,000 immediately for Thakurathi's treatment.

"The crowd broke into spontaneous applause," Madan Krishna remembers. But much

more than applause, such announcements are followed by a surprising response from the people. During the People's Movement of 2006, they created a fund to help treat those wounded in the state's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, and soon many started donating.

In May 2010, MaHa used its pull power to attend a peaceful rally against a Maoist-led 10-day strike to oust Prime Minsiter Madhav Kumar Nepal. The program was hugely successful, galvanising public opinion against the strike and forcing the Maoists to call it off. Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal never forgave MaHa for behaving like a class enemy, and retaliated by calling the anti-strike protests as one organised by Kathmandu's "sukila-mukila" (prim and proper).

MaHa is also supporting the Samata School which provides education for under-privileged children for Rs 100 a month. Whenever people in the diaspora wants to give money for a social cause, MaHa mostly hands it over to Uttam Sanjel of Samata, where the \$500 donated by the unnamed Bhutanese benefactor and former refugee in Canada went. @gunaraj

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HONDA

EVENTS

Gun & Camera,

An illustrated talk by art historian Regina Höfer as an introduction to the Nepali and Indian collection of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand's tour.
11 January, 5 to 6.30pm,
The Bakery Café, Sundhara

Book launch,

Aditya Adhikari's *The Bullet And The Ballot Box: The Story of Nepal's Maoist Revolution* gets launched.
12 January, 3pm onwards,
The City Museum Kathmandu, Darbar marg

Food fest,

In celebration of Sherpa cuisine, various food stalls, culture shows, and live music performances on offer.
Rs 200, 16 and 17 January, 1pm onwards,
Hyatt Ground, Boudha

Malini,

A charity theatre show of Rabindranath Tagore's *Malini* in support of Nepal Critical Care Development Foundation.
Rs 500, 15 January, 4.30pm to 6pm,
Theatre Village, Lajimpat



Journeying for art,

A painting exhibition by a promising young artist-Dhwoj Gurung.
11 January to 12 April, 11am to 5.30pm,
Park Gallery, Pulchowk, Lalitpur,
www.parkgallery.com.np



Changing Kathmandu

With vehicle registration increasing three folds in the last 10 years, Nepal's ranking (177 out of 178) on air quality in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) doesn't look like its improving anytime soon.
Cultural Studies Group Nepal invites environmental enthusiasts to a lecture by Bidya Banmali Pradhan, Atmospheric Environment Specialist, ICIMOD to learn about the issues and ways to tackle Nepal's pollution.
Rs 400 (for non-members), 16 January, 9.30am, Hotel Shanker, Lajimpat

Song of sorrow,

Watch *Peeda Geet*, a Nepali drama about an old man's struggle after being displaced from his village.
Till 10 January, 5pm, Theatre Village, Lajimpat

Film making,

An opportunity to learn basic tools and techniques of documentary film making, mentored by creative director Raül Tidor.
Rs 3,000, 20 January to 3 February (except Saturdays), 2 to 5pm, American Corner Pokhara, Pokhara Public Library, Mahendra Pul, 9806559166, www.photocircle.com



Bharatnatyam,

Let Matina Manandhar tell you the myths and ancient tales of Hindu Gods and Goddesses through her hands, feet and eyes.
17 January, 3pm, Sarwanam Theater, Kalikasthan, Kathmandu, 01-4011027

DINING



Yellow Chilli,

Enjoy renowned Indian chef Sanjeev Kapoor's signature Indian delicacies and a variety of other mouthwatering dishes.
Thapathali

Chongqing Fast Food,

Gear up for some mouth watering Chinese dishes like Sour and Spicy Pork and Kung Pao Chicken. *Thamel*



Saigon Pho,

Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. *Lajimpat*

Mezze by Roadhouse,

Dine at this place with smart, modern interior and chic terrace, and imbibe the Italian culture. *Darbar Marg*

Embers,

A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. *Krishna Gali, Pulchowk*

Chez Caroline,

Authentic ambience, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more. *Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070*



Aalishan,

For mouth-watering kebabs, flavourful curries and delicious biryanis. Live music on Fridays. *Jhamsikhel, 5521897, 5536926*



Manny's,

Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. *Jawalakhel, 5536919*

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दैनिक उपहार

९ जनालाई टि-सर्ट,
गोपीकृष्ण हलको मुभी टिकट र साङ्गीतिक सिडी

साप्ताहिक उपहार

२ जनालाई थप ३ महिनाको निःशुल्क सदस्यता

९ जनालाई Seiko Chronograph घडी

मासिक उपहार

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९ जनालाई

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MUSIC



Live Music,

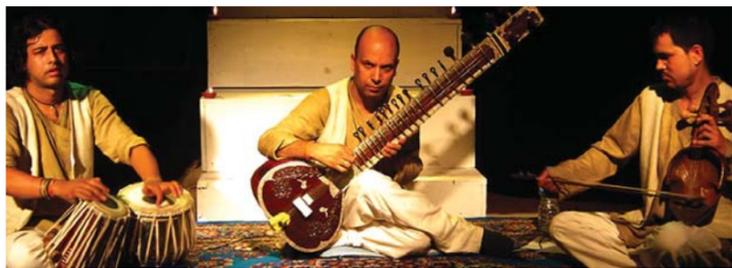
Listen to acclaimed Nepali singer Subani Moktan belt out popular hits. Every Friday, 6pm onwards, The Soci  t   Lounge Bar, Hattisar, 9813286869

Deathfest,

Accomplished – local and international – Extreme Metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre. 9 and 10 January, Borossa Lounge, Hattisar

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



Antaranga

A musical soiree by Sukarma to mark the New Year 2015. 9 January, 5pm, Gothale Theatre, Shilpee, Battisputali, Rs 1000, 500 and 300.

GETAWAYS

Better Weekends,

Good food and good company by the pool and Jacuzzi to begin your weekends on right note. Rs1,800 (exclusive of tax), 12.30pm onwards, Saturdays, The Caf  , Hyatt Regency

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Fulbari Resort,

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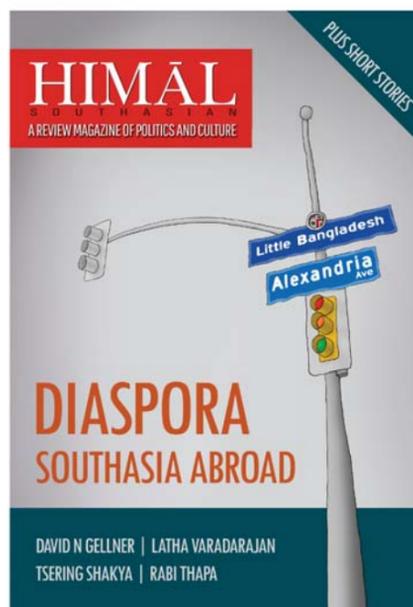
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Himal Southasian invites you to the launch of

Diaspora Southasia Abroad

The event will feature a reading by Rabi Thapa of his short story from the quarterly, followed by a Q&A session with the author.

This is a public event and open to all. Seating is first-come, first-served.

RSVP
Himal Southasian
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When: 4pm, 17 January 2015, Saturday
Where: The City Museum, Yak & Yeti Road, Durbar Marg
Contact: 9808563570



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The discovery of the endangered Pallas Cat in Manang has encouraged conservationists studying Himalayan biodiversity

NEPAL'S GOOD LUCK CAT

SONAM TASHI LAMA

Conservationist Tashi R Ghale was in Manang last year installing camera traps at 4,200m near Tilicho Lake to monitor snow leopards. Looking at the images captured by the camera one day, he found not a leopard but a small wild cat.

On further investigation, it turned out to be a Pallas Cat, named after the German naturalist Peter Simon Pallas who first wrote about the wild cat found in the mountains and grasslands of Central Asia back in 1776. Since then, the cat has become nearly extinct because of hunting and habitat destruction, but it had never been seen in Nepal.

Because it didn't have a Nepali name, researchers called Pallas Cat 'Tashi Biralo' in honour of Tashi Ghale. Since 'Tashi' means 'good luck' in Tibetan, Pallas Cat is now also known as the 'Good Luck Cat'.

"This is a very interesting and important research despite the difficult terrain and weather," says Paras Singh, member of the team. "We were lucky to find it."

The cat is in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) endangered list, and it is an indication of just how elusive the animal is that every camera sighting is greeted with great excitement in the conservation community. Until recently there had been only two sightings of the

Pallas Cats in Central Asia. The furry animal was thought to be extinct in the Himalaya until it was caught on camera in Pakistan and Bhutan in 2012. The sighting in Nepal is significant also because it is the highest-ever of the animal.

In addition to camera tracking snow leopards, the team is now also trying to find out more about the habits and habitat of the cat in the Annapurna Conservation Area. The project is funded by Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, The Rufford Foundation-UK and The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, and implemented by Global Primate Network-Nepal and Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation-ACAP.

Knowing more about the cat's behaviour will help protect the species by finding out its relationship with the other carnivores in the area, and its main preys. The cat shares its habitat with the snow leopard, weasels, and ghoral sheep among others. In future, researchers would also like to do a genetic study, and find out more about how climate change will affect it in future.

In phase one, more than 30 remote cameras will be installed to record the possible presence of the Tashi Cat in Nyeshang and Nar-Phu valley of northern Manang. "It is important to find out more about the cat, and spread awareness of its decline," says Ghale. "We plan to model its

CAT ON CAMERA: The Pallas Cat caught on camera in Manang last year.

Field Biologist Tashi Ghale installs a remote camera at 4,200m near Tilicho Lake.

Research team of biologists in the Annapurna Conservation Area of Manang where they also use tracks in the snow to find out more about the cat's habitat.

A recently captured image of the Pallas Cat in Annapurna Conservation Area.

ecological niche and find out more about what led to its decline in Central Asia."

The team is planning to replicate the study in various other parts of the Himalaya to find out about the cat's range. The team had published a similar study about the red panda habitat in the international peer-reviewed journal *Biological Conservation*. 🇳🇵



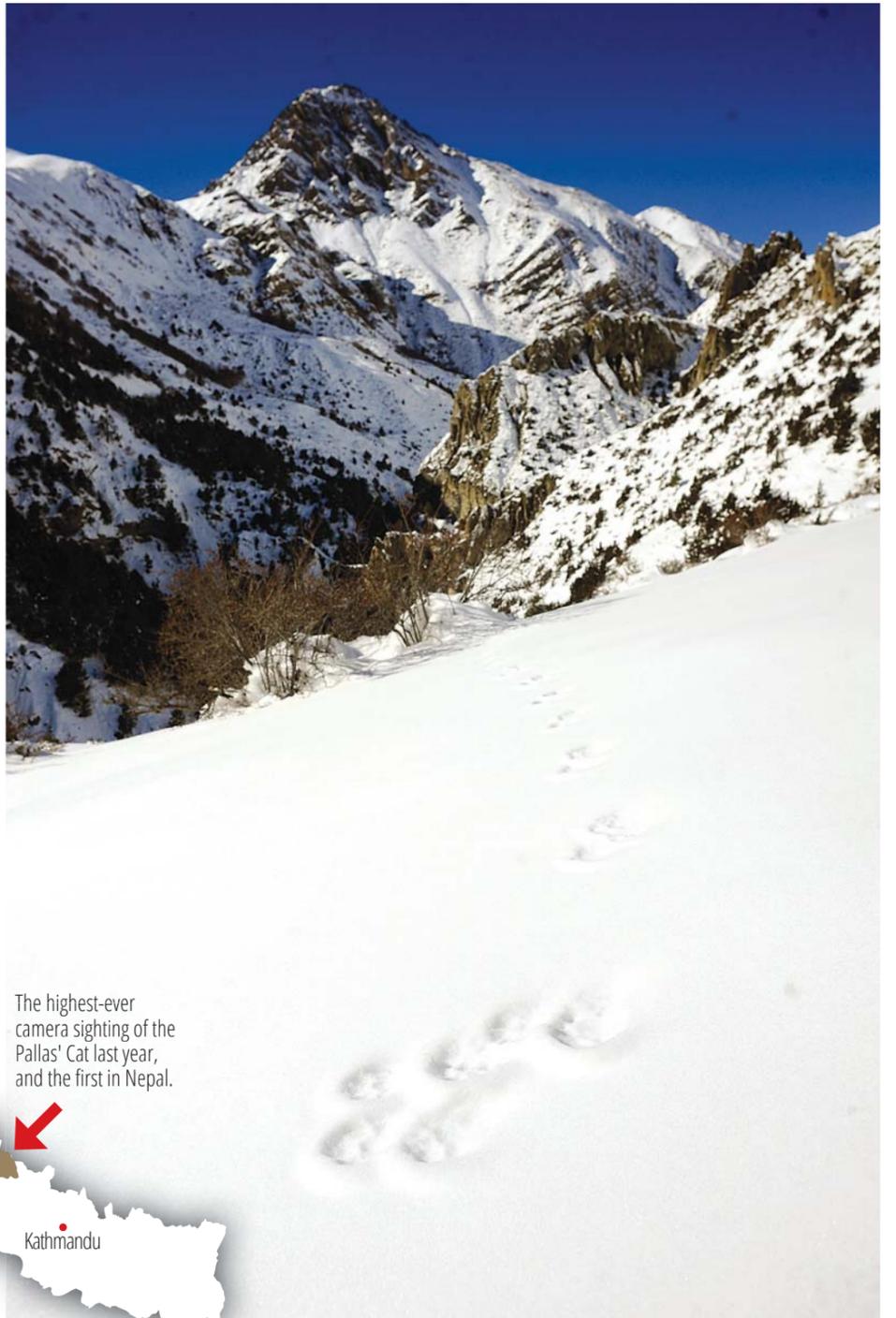
Sonam Tashi Lama is a Conservation Coordinator at the Red Panda Network.

nepalitimes.com

■ Watch Tashi R Ghale's video of the first Pallas cat sighting in Nepal



ALL PICS: TASHI R GHALE/GLOBAL PRIMATE NETWORK



The highest-ever camera sighting of the Pallas' Cat last year, and the first in Nepal.

Manang

Kathmandu





Kendrick) though gold instead of glass (again a rhyming thing I'm sure). Finally, the cow belongs to little Jack (Daniel Huttlestone), remember the magic beans?

The poor couple has three nights to complete these absurd demands that catapult them into a flurry of activities (more antics really) most of which take place in the titular "Woods". In the midst of trying to explain everything while singing at the top of their lungs, our various characters eventually escape from their tower, meet their prince charmings, find the goose that lays the golden eggs, and become parents - though not necessarily in that order.

Unfortunately, the film does not end there. Nothing can really save this unwieldy film - aside from the always wonderful Meryl Streep who is delightfully wicked and charming, sometimes within one breath. Emily Blunt is heartwarming, but poor Anna Kendrick suffers from a thinly written role as a rather unfortunate Cinderella who is forced to speak to birds and finds a callow prince indeed in Chris Pine, who perhaps has the best line in the film: "I was brought up to be charming, not sincere," he says with genuine puzzlement.

If you really must watch this film, and you do love musicals, well, be warned, the only real draw here is Meryl Streep, and a very real possibility that you might fall asleep.

nepalitimes.com

Into the Woods is a smash hit Broadway musical written by Stephen Sondheim and adapted into a film by his partner in crime, James Lapine.

I, for one, have never quite understood (aside from opera) why stories need to be told exclusively



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

in song, *Into the Woods* being an even more egregious example of this kind of lapse because it collapses four beloved tales by the Grimm Brothers into one unholy, fairly incomprehensible mega fairy tale.

Let me summarise: Once upon a time, there was a Baker (James Corden) and his wife (Emily Blunt). They are childless - the Baker's father having been cursed by a Witch (Meryl Streep) for stealing magic beans from her garden. In order to reverse the curse (believe me this rhyme recurs throughout the musical) the Witch orders the Baker and his wife to bring her a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, hair as yellow as corn, and a slipper as pure as gold.

For those of you familiar with your fairy tales, you will probably have guessed that the cape refers to Red Riding Hood (Lilla Crawford), the corn coloured hair belongs to Rapunzel (MacKenzie Mauzy), who the Witch has captured and is also incidentally the Baker's sister, and well, the slipper is Cinderella's (Anna

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HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

BEFORE DEADLINE: Leaders from the four major political parties Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, UCPN (Maoist) and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Democratic sit for a meeting with CA Chair Subhas Nembang at the Constituent Assembly Building in Baneshwor on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

CRIMINAL ACT: The main accused behind the murder of Supreme Court Justice Rana Bahadur Bam, Megh Raj Thapa (second from left) with his accomplices at Nepal Police headquarters in Naxal on Saturday.



DEVAKI BISTA

WOMEN FRIENDLY: A women-only minibus service was launched in Kathmandu on Sunday to prevent women from gropers. The four 17-seater buses will ply the Balkot-Kalanki route on a trial phase.



BIKRAM RAI

DOWN UNDER: Women take a dip in the Salinadi River on the first day of Swasthani Bratakatha festival at Sankhu on Monday.

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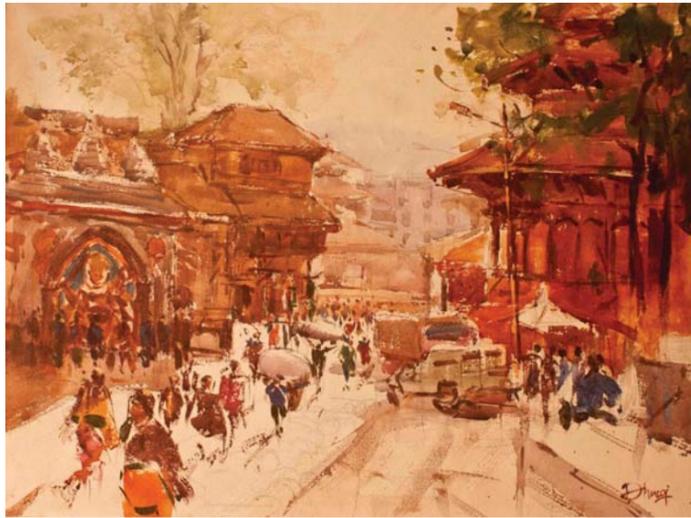
Journeying for art

The art of the landscape has faded into the backwaters of the Nepali contemporary scene. That's understandable given how we haven't seen a whole lot of thought-provoking material in that genre. They certainly exist in their own world of kitsch but at the end of the day if you've seen one, you have seen them all.

An exception is artist Dhwoj Gurung, a third year BFA student at Lalit Kala Campus. Gurung was studying Environment Science when he realised his passion for art and switched majors.

With an art practice that is only in its fifth year, Gurung may not be a 'veteran', but the sheer volume, quality, and the nuance of visual thoughtfulness in his work belie his fresh entry. Efficient brushwork puts a no-nonsense sensibility in his work, but he defies the norms of conventional art and gives you a dose of visual drama. Every square inch speaks volumes about his enthusiasm.

Consider "Around Kalbhairav" (pic, right). It is an intricate painting full of activities, but everything has a direction and a purpose. You can hear the noise on the street and feel the real brick road



at Basantapur as your eyes meander away into the distance of Maruhiti. The "Landscape from Rukum" has magically drifted into place rather than a canvas that is painted on. There is the whimsical and half-formed image of "Dancing Trees" that are still expanding and growing on paper. The washes and dabs of colour in his paintings have a will of their

own, trying to break out of their outlines but heeding to an unseen discipline nonetheless.

Carefree as his images are, there's a threadbare framework holding the chaos together. They say that everything is political; my argument is that within this visual dynamic in Gurung's work, there is scope to explore subversion. I encourage Gurung to move away from the postcard-ready scenery and take on the grit of reality.

There is a kind of aesthetic of the unfinished in the sweeping gestures of his whirlwind lines and brushwork. Of course, the word 'unfinished' is representative of so many facets of Nepali life and history. The funeral pyre scene is poignant in its own cold, matter-of-fact way. The people in it are but hurried strokes that still manage

to convey emotion from behind its mask of objective rendering.

His direction comes as little surprise when you learn that he grew up in the valley of Daraundi, under the shadow of Manaslu. However, his life has also been the often repeated artists' story of "nature inspires but family discourages". Gurung has taken it all in stride, and with his trusty cycle by his side, has covered an impressive tract of ground all over Nepal, from Nuwakot to ABC circuit to Janabahal.

This exhibition represents but a step in Gurung's journey. The subject matter could use less of the mundane, but Gurung's approach reflects a sensibility that should be welcomed in contemporary Nepali visual culture. While others might state that the very genre of watercolour landscape or academic painting is Western and therefore a lost cause, I am not as cynical. There is an earnest quality in the execution of his work that adds a personal narrative to his images. He's certainly taking the old school road, but building a foundation of trust on the way.

Moreover, in our age of visual saturation through publishing, TV and internet, when you find people still working en plein-air, you have to give them some credit. 🇳🇵

Supriya Manandhar

Dhwoj Gurung: Journeying for art
11 January to 12 April
Park Gallery, Pulchowk
11am to 5.30pm

REVIEW

The Rox

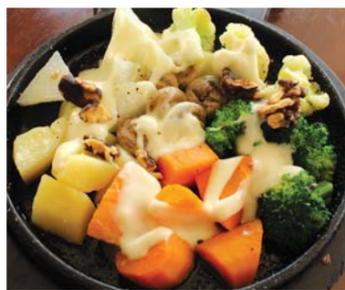
Dining at the Rox restaurant involves not merely eating but a complete gastronomic experience, one that all the senses revel in. Hyatt's signature restaurant, The Rox specialises in Southern European cuisine and their newly introduced winter menu brings you hearty dishes that evoke the warm balmy weather of the Mediterranean region — a welcome change from Kathmandu's current chilly weather.

Everything on the menu sounded enticing but choices had to be made. We started with the wild mushroom soup (Rs 850), a thick luscious puree of fresh mushrooms with bits of bacon, morel mushrooms, porcini dust and a drizzle of rosemary oil. The garnish of caramelised onions added dimension and sweetness to this earthy dish.

Then onto the salads, Chef Gopi Nandakumar does away with the traditional thick slabs of tuna that are fundamental to the tuna Nicoise salad (Rs1150) - instead he creates a tuna confit. The tuna is



rubbed with salt and spices, then slowly simmered in olive oil, and then shredded evenly. The bright jewel-toned peppers, the lilac of the onions, the ostentatious scarlet of the tomatoes, and the green of the lettuce offset by the rich yellow of the egg yolks makes this dish look as pretty as it tastes. The other salad we sampled was the poached pears with beets (Rs 1000). The fruit's sweetness was accentuated by the red wine it was steeped in with a touch of fresh oregano, the acidity of the beets,



and the tartness of the sour cream. I could very well eat this salad as a dessert.

A 500 something word review does not do justice to a meal at



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

the Rox for here I am, halfway through, and we haven't even come to the mains. For the main course I had the rainbow trout (Rs 1850), the chef's specialty that is baked to perfection. The creamy flakes of fresh fish served on a bed of wilted spinach are beautifully complemented by a fresh light lemon caper sauce. The shepherd's pie (Rs 1850) uses minced lamb sautéed with grated vegetables and a rich tomato puree covered by a thick coating of smooth mashed potatoes, covered in

parmesan cheese and baked until golden - a version of the classic British dish that even the most fastidious of eaters would not be able to find fault with. The winter roast vegetables come in the iron skillet that they are roasted on with a four-cheese fondue (brie, roquefort, camembert and our very own desi yak) with roasted walnuts. The surprise in that dish for me was the roasted radishes - the roasting cuts away the pungency and leaves it sweet and tasting more like a freshly baked yacon (ground apple).

It is a sin to walk away from a meal like that without having something sweet to finish it off. My choice - the ricotta pancakes (Rs 1000). A light pancake that encases a mound of ricotta cheese comes with a compote of winter fruits, yoghurt and a drizzle of chocolate sauce. Hyatt certainly has the best bakery and confectionery among our 'starred' hotels.

I asked Chef Gopi what he enjoys most about his job and he told me that he is very passionate about his job for if he is not, it is evident in the food. 🇳🇵
Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: The Rox @ Hyatt Regency is in Boudha.

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Why so many deaths?

An estimated 1,500 Nepalis leave Tribhuvan International Airport every day to work in the Gulf. Every day three to four of the migrant workers make the trip back home in a coffin.



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

In the last three years, 400 Nepalis have died in Qatar alone. And yet there has been no initiative to investigate the causes of deaths of the migrant workers who strongly contribute to the country's economy. Remittance forms nearly a quarter of the country's GDP.

A startling aspect of the high number of deaths among the young

men aged 20-40 years is that they usually do not suffer from diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and coronary heart disease prior to departing. All migrant workers are mandated by the respective countries of employment to have a medical screening performed by a physician to screen for inadmissible conditions. Even if the medical screenings are spurious, the death rate is exceptionally high for this young population with no comorbidities.

Hence, many questions arise for which we have inadequate answers.

Are the death rates of migrant workers from India, Bangladesh and the Philippines as high as the migrant workers from Nepal? Why are autopsies not performed in host countries to find the cause of death? Does the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Nepal and the host nations not have a clause on autopsies? If not, are



serious efforts being made to amend the MOU?

Without documented causes of death, there is a lot of speculation to identify the reasons for the high rates of death among Nepali migrant workers.

Dehydration may be an important but overlooked cause of death because many of the migrant workers come from the mid-hill regions of Nepal and are

put straight to work without any time to acclimate to the desert heat. Furthermore, the importance of hydration is rarely emphasised. In addition, many migrant workers might consume large amounts of alcohol and drinking in excess can lead to dehydration and possibly life-threatening conditions.

Road traffic death may be another cause due to lack of knowledge about the traffic rules or

lack there of. Countries that do not practice strict traffic rules can have many deaths as a result of accidents especially where motor vehicles travel much faster than in Nepal.

Another cause of death can be mental stress and trauma experienced by majority of migrant workers due to overexertion, overworking and lack of communication due to language barriers. It may not be astonishing to discover that many migrant workers commit suicide or become victims of homicide. Finally, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis E and typhoid may be other possible causes of death.

Authorities need to take the initiative to form a panel of health and legal professionals and work in conjunction with host countries to determine the probable causes of deaths of many migrant Nepali workers and take preventive measures to avoid more deaths in the future.

It is the least the country can do for those who have contributed so much. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Slimmed down

If you thought the iPhone 6 was slim and light, wait until you get a hold of Gionee's Elife S5.1. It is 0.4 mm thinner than its already thin predecessor Elife S5.5 and is the latest model from the Chinese smartphone manufacturer (released November 2014). It is nearly impossible to tell if you are indeed carrying one in your pocket because it weighs less than 100g.

Design and look wise, the Elife S5.1 is up to par with far more expensive and big-name smartphones and can be best described as a combination of iPhone 5s and Xperia Z3 though it does bear much resemblance to iPhone 6. The phone uses Dual Gorilla glass 3 design and aluminium frame which is slick and gives it a high quality finish, and many will agree when I say that the Gionee Elife S5.1 is one of the most attractive looking phones in the market today.

While the Elife S5.1 does have a slim and attractive exterior, the shaving away of few inches has also let the phone to compromise on some components. The 4.8" screen AMOLED display has a lower resolution of 720x1280 instead of 1080p as in S5.5. Although a little lacking in pixels

- 4.8" 16M-color 720p Super AMOLED capacitive touchscreen
- Android OS v4.4.2 KitKat with Amigo OS v2.0
- Octa-core processor
- 5.2mm body, 97.7g
- 8MP camera with LED flash, 5MP front camera
- 16GB inbuilt storage, 1GB RAM

(306ppi), it manages to produce impressively sharp images.

There are some downsides, of course. You do not get a lot of space to play as expandable storage is not available. The phone has 1GB RAM, 16GB internal memory and no slots for memory cards that might explain the presence of a USB cable adapter as its tag-along companion.

Powered by the Mediatek chipset with an octa-core processor and a quad-core



graphics accelerator, the phone is not a pure Android device and uses Amigo (Gionee's customised OS).

Now here is the fun part, the 8MP rear camera does its job pretty well except in low-light conditions. The front 5MP cam is impressive and will make you look pretty (or handsome) so this little Elife S5.1 is very selfie-friendly.

One positive surprise for the reviewer was the phone's battery life. Once fully charged, the battery lasts almost eight hours in regular use and has a shorter battery life if used for gaming and entertainment as with other phones.

The Elife S5.1 may not be the best phone in terms of performance, but if you are looking to actively use your device for social networking and are in the market for a stylish handset, you will definitely give it a second look. 🇳🇵

Yantricks Verdict: It may not be the phone for those who want to enjoy their Android experience to the fullest, but will satisfy users who prefer form over function.

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Bringing Cuba back

The world has much to learn from Cuba and why embargoes don't work

Earlier this month, President Barack Obama announced the restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba after more than five decades of a misguided policy which my uncle, John F Kennedy, and my father, Robert F Kennedy, had been responsible for enforcing after the US embargo against the country was first implemented in October 1960 by the Eisenhower administration.



GUEST COLUMN
Robert F Kennedy, Jr

The move has raised hopes that the embargo itself is now destined to disappear. But Cuba is still a dictatorship. The Cuban government restricts basic freedoms like the freedoms of speech and assembly, and it owns the media. Elections, as in most old-school Communist countries, offer limited options and, during periodic crackdowns, the Cuban government fills Cuban jails with political prisoners.

However, there are real tyrants in the world with whom the United States has become a close ally and many governments with much worse human rights records than Cuba.

Azerbaijan, for example, whose president Ilham Aliyev boils his opponents in oil. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and many others where torture, enforced disappearances, religious intolerance, suppression of speech and assembly, mediaeval oppression of women, sham elections and non-judicial executions are all government practices.

Despite its poverty, Cuba has managed some impressive accomplishments. Cuba's government boasts the highest literacy rates for its population of any nation in the hemisphere. Cuba claims its citizens enjoy universal access to health care and more doctors per capita than any other nation in the Americas. Cuba's doctors, reportedly, have high quality medical training. Unlike other Caribbean islands where poverty means starvation, every Cuban receives a monthly food ration book that provides for their basic necessities.

Even Cuban government officials admit that the economy is smothered by the inefficiencies of Marxism, although they also argue that the principal cause of the island's economic woes is the strangling impact of the 60-year-old trade embargo which unfairly punishes ordinary Cubans.

The embargo impedes economic development by making virtually every commodity and

every species of equipment both astronomically expensive and difficult to obtain. Worst of all, instead of punishing the regime for its human rights restrictions, the embargo has fortified the dictatorship by justifying oppression. It provides every Cuban with visible evidence of the bogeyman that every dictator requires: an outside enemy to justify an authoritarian national security state.

The embargo has also given Cuban leaders a plausible monster on which to blame Cuba's poverty by lending credence to their argument that the United States, not Marxism, has caused the island's economic distress. The embargo has almost certainly helped keep the Castro brothers Fidel and Raul in power for the last five decades.

It has justified the Cuban government's oppressive measures against political dissent in the same way that US national security concerns have been used by some US politicians to justify incursions against our bill of rights, including the constitutional rights to jury trial, habeas corpus, effective counsel and freedom from unwarranted search and seizure, eavesdropping, cruel and unusual punishment, torturing of prisoners, extraordinary renditions and the freedom to travel, to name just a few.

It is almost beyond irony that

the very same politicians who argued that we should punish Castro for curtailing human rights and mistreating prisoners in Cuban jails elsewhere contend that the United States is justified in mistreating our own prisoners in Cuban jails.

Perhaps the best argument for lifting the embargo is that it does not work. Our 60-plus year embargo against Cuba is the longest in history and yet the Castro regime has remained in power during its entire duration. The embargo clearly discredits US foreign policy, not only across Latin America, but also with Europe and other regions.

Most recently, while we fault Cuba for jailing and mistreating political prisoners, we have simultaneously been subjecting prisoners, many of them innocent by the Pentagon's own admission, to torture – including waterboarding and illegal detention and imprisonment without trial in Cuban prison cells in Guantanamo Bay.

While we blame Cuba for not allowing its citizens to travel freely to the United States, we restrict our own citizens from traveling freely to Cuba. In that sense, the embargo seems particularly anti-American. Why does my passport say that I can't visit Cuba? Why can't I go where I want to go? Why doesn't our government trust Americans to see for themselves the ravages of

dictatorship?

Had President Kennedy survived to a second administration, the embargo would have been lifted half a century ago. President Kennedy told Castro, through intermediaries, that the United States would end the embargo when Cuba stopped exporting violent revolutionists to Latin America's Alliance for Progress nations – a policy that mainly ended with Che Guevara's death in 1967 and when Castro stopped allowing the Soviets to use the island as a base for the expansion of Soviet power in the hemisphere.

Well, the Soviets have been gone since 1991 but the US-led embargo continues to choke Cuba's economy. If the objective of our foreign policy in Cuba is to promote freedom for its subdued citizens, we should be opening ourselves up to them, not shutting them out.

We have so much to learn from Cuba – from its successes in some areas and failures in others. As I walked through the streets of Havana, Model-Ts chugged by, Che's soaring effigy hung in wrought iron above the street, and a bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln stood in a garden on a tree-lined avenue.

I could feel the weight of 60 years of Cuban history, a history so deeply intertwined with that of my own country. (IPS)

Robert F Kennedy Jr is a lawyer with the National Resources Defense Council, son of Robert Kennedy and nephew of President John F Kennedy. This is an exclusive column for Inter Press Service.

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Preparing to be

KUNDA DIXIT

When (not if) the next big earthquake strikes Nepal, don't ask what the government can do for you, ask what your community can do for itself.

Endless political gridlock and dead-end development has distracted government attention from preparing for a long overdue mega-earthquake in Kathmandu, a city experts say is the most vulnerable in the world to seismic risk. A bill to set up a Disaster Risk Management Commission is stuck in parliament, and a turf war between line ministries has left contingency plans in limbo.

"Our best option is to decentralise risk management to the household, village or municipality level," said Surya Narayan Shrestha, an engineer with the National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) which is working with town and village councils in enforcing building codes and training staff to ensure compliance.

The last big earthquake to hit Kathmandu was 8.3 magnitude and struck at 2.30PM on 15 January 1934 killing 8,000 people in the Valley and another 10,000 in the rest of Nepal and India.

Experts predict that an earthquake of similar intensity today would destroy 60 per cent of the buildings in the city, and kill at least 100,000 people outright. Hospitals left standing will be understaffed and overwhelmed with the wounded. Relief will be affected by crippled airports and highways.

Frustrated that the draft Disaster Risk Management Act does not pay sufficient attention to preparedness, and has not been ratified by parliament even after five years, activists and donors are in a dilemma - try to rework it or lobby to finally pass a faulty bill? The Home Ministry is preoccupied with post-disaster response after earthquakes and floods, but risk management is about being ready and should be under the purview of the new commission and coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office.

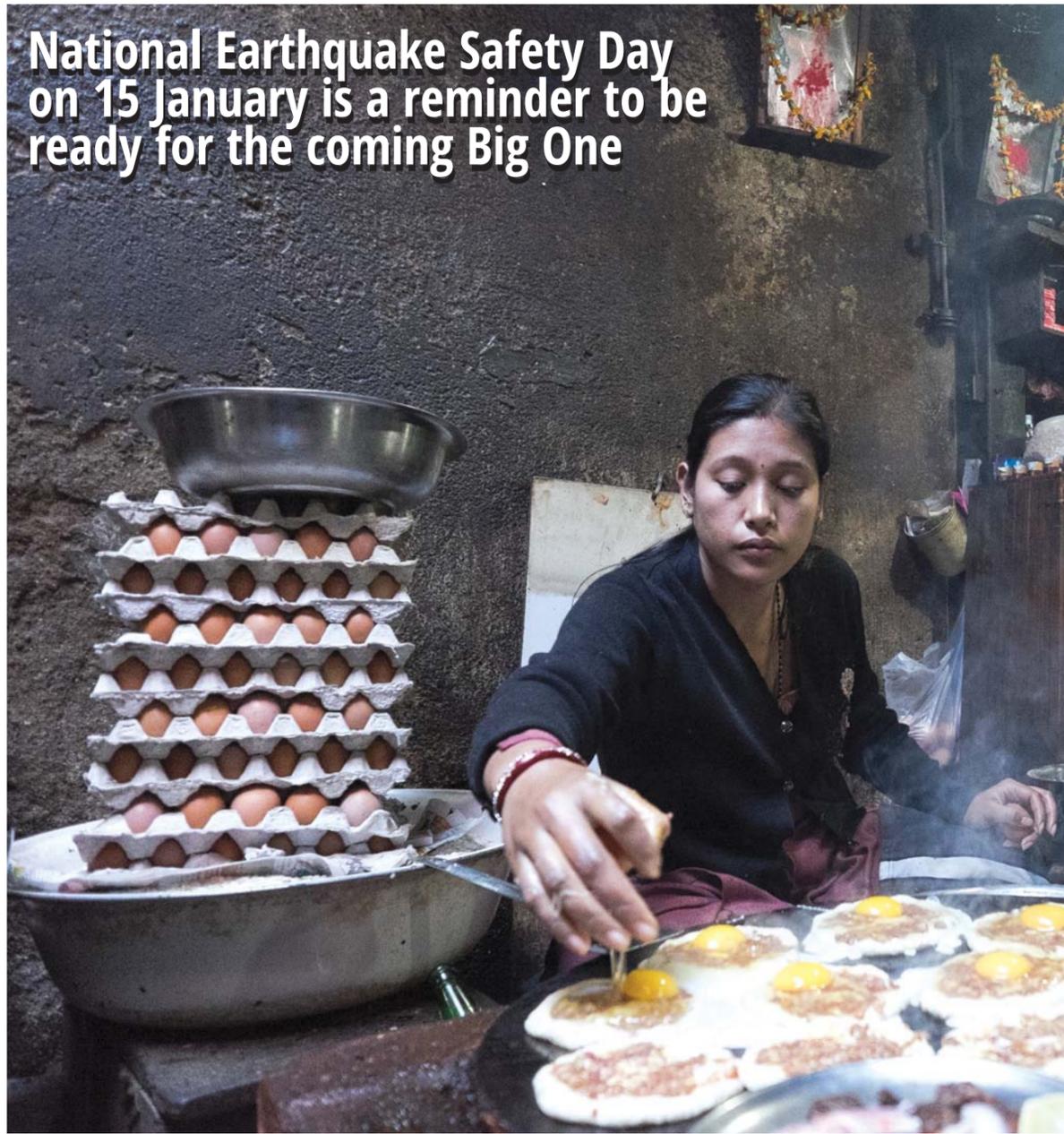
Despite the slow movement on legislation, experts say Nepal is regarded as a role model in the region for its innovative approach in its School Earthquake Safety Program in which the Department of Education works with a consortium of donors to conduct drills and retrofit vulnerable schools. A similar program to strengthen six Kathmandu Valley hospitals to withstand earthquakes and equip them to deal with mass casualties is also in the works.

"The idea is not just to make schools safe but the whole school system," Shrestha explained, "not just retrofit hospitals but make the hospital system prepared for disasters."

NSET is working with municipalities and village councils to include compliance to building codes in their minimum performance criteria, encourage self-regulation by architects and contractors to promote seismic-resistant designs, and train masons to reinforce self-built homes.

"We have to be prepared to be prepared," said NSET's founder Amod Mani Dixit, "earthquakes don't just kill people they kill countries. We don't have to wait for the constitution elections to be ready." Since it will take time for the government to act, NSET is trying to scale up its activities and

National Earthquake Safety Day on 15 January is a reminder to be ready for the coming Big One



involve institutions in disaster preparedness.

Learning from earthquakes elsewhere in the world, a damage assessment of Kathmandu Valley has also been drawn up with maps of open spaces with pre-positioned water supply and emergency equipment. All that needs to be done is to put those

plans into action.

"To know what an earthquake is like you have to live through one," says 89-year-old Bhuyu Maharjan of Patan, who was six years old in 1934. "We thought it was the end of the world." He described the ground moving like waves, deep cracks in the fields. The Taleju Temple in Mangal Bazar

collapsed, and 22 people were killed inside the Honacha eatery nearby.

Eighty years later, eye-witnesses to the Great Earthquake of 1934 (read *testimonies, below*) describe the terror of trying to flee collapsing buildings, the pall of dust over the city, living in tents in the cold

"There was so much dust it

AS TOLD TO **SONIA AWALE**

BHUYU MAHARJAN, 89



I was playing marbles with one of my friends right there (points across the square). My aunts were washing clothes at that well. Half the house fell on top of the well, and we narrowly escaped. There was dust everywhere, it covered the sun and it suddenly went dark. Everyone came running to the lachhi (square) because it was the only open space, and it was crowded with families. My grandfather's leg was trapped under one of the fallen buildings. Another man's leg was crushed by a wooden pillar, and he was yelling for help so they cut the pillar to free his leg.

One of my relatives was at a funeral for his dead father when the quake struck. He had just enough time to rush out, but the priest was buried under the building by the river and his body remained there for 16 days until it started to stink.

I was six, and we lived in tents for more than a month surviving on bits of food. Most houses in our neighbourhood were destroyed, my house was damaged and two weeks after the earthquake it collapsed completely. My grandfather borrowed Rs 50 from the government to rebuild our house, he didn't take more because he was afraid he couldn't pay it back.

PURNA LAL AWALE, 91



I was only seven but was working at the brick kiln in Koteswor helping make roof tiles. Everything started shaking, and I ran out. I could see a great cloud of brown dust rising over the city, many houses were buried in Thapathali. I wasn't afraid, but I was worried about my family in Patan. I ran all the way home praying "Narayan, Narayan." I passed many buildings that had collapsed. Along the river, there

was water and sand gushing out of the ground. Surprisingly, our house was intact. A neighbour had been looking out of the window when the quake struck, and the building collapsed around him. He miraculously survived. We stayed in a tent, but I don't remember how long. There were many aftershocks.

INDRA NATH ARYAL, 94



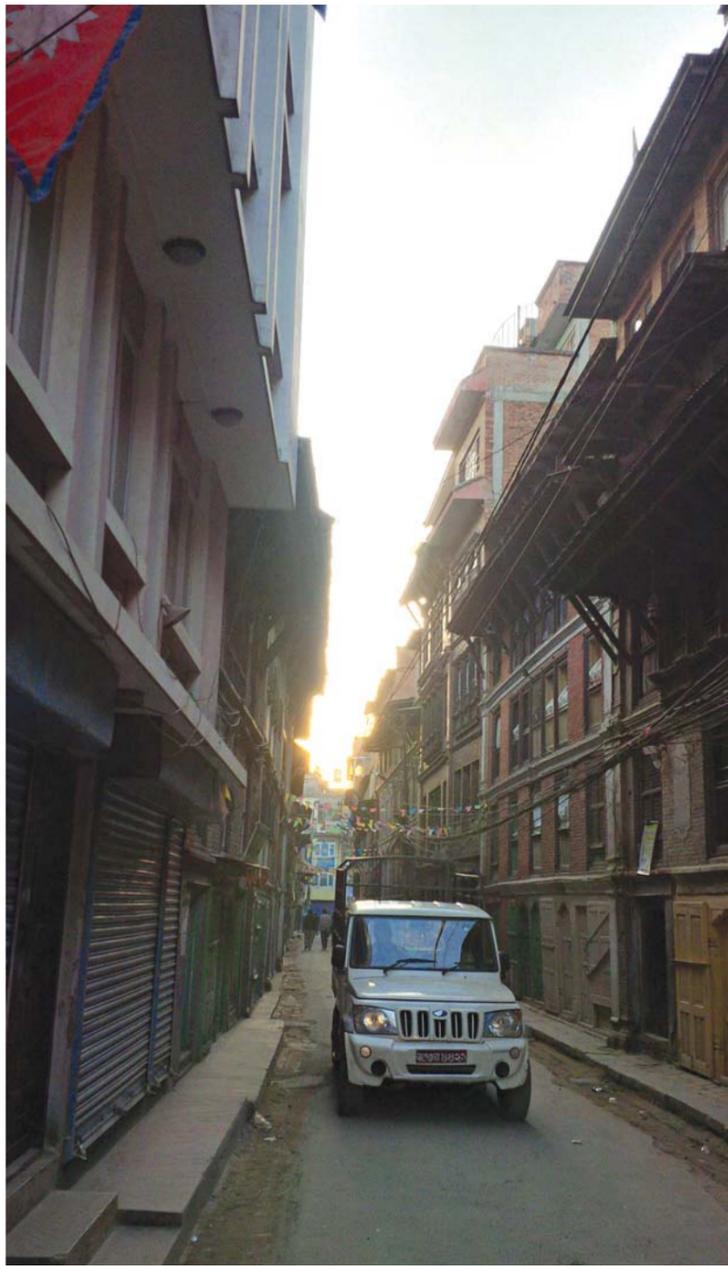
I was ten years old and was travelling to the haat bazar in Jitpur near Birganj. We were just starting to cross this small bridge over a river when everything started swaying. I grabbed the plank just so I wouldn't fall, if I had been halfway across I would have fallen into the river. I held on to it for two minutes until the shaking stopped. Water and sand was shooting up from

the river like fountains. I went back home, but our house was badly damaged. We pitched tents in the fields and lived there. We borrowed Rs 1,000 to rebuild our house, but later Juddha Sumshere cancelled all our debts. My father's aunt had back injuries and broke her leg when her house collapsed.

prepared



KENJI KWOK



KUNDA DIXIT

AS FRAGILE AS EGGS: The Honacha eatery in (left) Patan was reconstructed on the same spot where it was destroyed by the 1934 earthquake, killing 22 people. Heavily built-up Kathmandu is on top of the list of cities around the world most vulnerable to earthquakes (below).

How frequent?

It is generally accepted that a major earthquake hits Kathmandu every 80 years. This is based on historical records of earthquakes. However, seismologists say the real frequency of mega-quakes of magnitude 8.0 and above happen about every 500 years.

Before 1934, the last big 8.0M quake was the one in 1255 that shook Kathmandu and killed the king. Since then, there has been no big earthquake in western Nepal, and tectonic strain is building up along the Main Frontal Thrust fault line that traverses the Himalayan foothills. The next Big One is due any day, but between Gorkha and Dehradun in India.

"That doesn't mean Kathmandu will be spared," warned Som Nath Sapkota of the National Seismological Centre, "you don't need an 8 magnitude to destroy Kathmandu, even 7 is enough."

Sapkota has studied the 8.3 magnitude 1934 earthquake, placing the epicentre not in Bihar as originally thought, but in Sankhuwasabha, and found evidence of a massive rupture zone between Bardibas and Dharan where the terrain has moved 5m.

The Himalaya was formed by the Indian plate ploughing under the Eurasian landmass 70 million years ago, and this process continues with the India still moving northwards at 2cm a year. According to the elastic rebound theory, an 8 magnitude quake makes the rock layers snap and slip 6m at a time, and Sapkota says it takes about 500 years for enough tension to build up for that to happen.

"The trouble in Nepal is that there is not enough research and too much panic," Sapkota said.

Kathmandu is prone to severe shaking even during minor quakes because the city is built on clay and sediment of a previous lake, and is also prone to liquefaction.

with very little food for weeks.

Shyam Maharjan's father had gone to the Bagmati River for a bath when the quake struck. He remembers water gushing out of cracks on the ground, and suddenly the river flooded as if it was the monsoon. He had to swim across to get back home. "For many years later, my father was

always scared even when there were minor tremors," Maharjan said.

Man Maya Shakya, 70, remembers her mother telling her of "walking on the roofs of collapsed houses" because the streets were blocked with rubble. Her uncle had been buried in one of the houses, and had to be dug

out. There were so many corpses they were piled high and brought to the streets to be cremated.

If that was what it was like when the Valley's population was only 200,000 and houses were mostly brick and timber, the next Big One in a built-up city of 2.5 million would do much more damage. 🇳🇵

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- 70 years after, #178
- Thinking the unthinkable, #638
- Shudder to think, #587
- 1934, #723
- Big Shakes: Data visualisation
- Interactive map of earthquakes in Nepal in last 500 years

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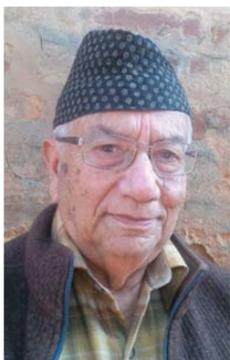
- Watch 70 Million Years in 2 Minutes, NatGeo animation

became dark"

nepalitimes.com

- See video clips of interviews with survivors.

KAMAL MANI DIXIT, 85



I was four-and-half and still remember it was a school holiday, so all of us children were in the house in Gairidhara. It was a sunny afternoon, and I was playing with my cousin, Kalyan, on the second floor balcony. Suddenly, we heard our aunt shouting at us to get down, and it took us some time to go down the staircase. We had a narrow escape. Ten seconds after we got out of the house a part of it came crashing down. We lived in tents for weeks after, ten members of a family in

one tent. For some reason, I remember a flower growing on the ruins of a collapsed house. I would sit outside the tent and look at the stars. Someone asked me what I was doing, I said I was counting the stars. I still remember him telling me: "There are 900,000, you don't need to count them. Now go to sleep."

CHIRMAI AWALE, 95



I was 12, and we were playing near the Ganesh Mandir that afternoon with children from the neighbourhood. Suddenly, everyone started shouting "Hah, hah." I thought they were trying to scare away the crows, but it was to warn people to get out of their houses. Some of us started crying for our mothers. One shopkeeper narrowly escaped his collapsing house when he rushed out to help us. There was dust everywhere, it was like a fog, we couldn't see anything at all. The houses on our street had collapsed, some were leaning on each other. Our parents finally located us, and they cried and prayed with joy. I can't imagine what would have happened

if our parents had died. After the earthquake, we couldn't even find our house everything had collapsed. We lived in tents for months, there was no food because the food stored in our house was buried. Despite all this my pre-arranged marriage went ahead four days after the earthquake. I have seen a lot, suffered a lot. Every time there is a tremor, I get very scared.



Quake mascot

The Himalayan red panda has been enlisted as the mascot for awareness about disaster preparedness in Nepal. A cartoon public service announcement was launched last year. The National Earthquake Safety Day was first marked in 1999 to commemorate the devastating 8.3 earthquake of 15 January, 1934. The PSA has been broadcast on local tv channels, and was made in cooperation with the US Embassy in Kathmandu. The wise panda gives advice to children on what they should do in the classroom if an earthquake strikes. It also advises families to leave their interior doors slightly ajar at all times to prevent them from jamming shut during an earthquake.

nepalitimes.com

- Watch red panda PSA

EXTORTION TERROR

Karobar, 6 January

कारोबार

At a time when the deadline for the new constitution nears and the political transition is in a sensitive phase, CPN-M Maoists of the Netra Bikram Chand (Biplab) faction have started extorting business all over the country. Traders and businessmen have started turning their mobile phones off and not coming to their offices and shops in order to avoid the extortion demands. "They are sowing terror in the entire business community," said Pashupati Murarka of the FNCCI. Parties inside the Constituent Assembly, including members of the 31-member group led by the UCPN(M) are also involved in extortion, and using the excuse of organising mass meetings to raise money. The targets are businessmen, shopkeepers, schools, contractors, civil servants, VDC secretaries and ordinary people.



The CPN-M's Padam Rai said: "We are not hermits, of course we need to raise money for our political organisation, and that is why we have asked people to donate money to us." Police Chief of the mid-western region Keshar Bahadur Shahi said there had been a flurry of complaints from businesses about extortion in recent days. "Some have lodged written complaints, while others are more careful because of the fear of repercussions," Shahi said.



Bad air

Gagan Thapa in *himalkhabar.com*, 27 December

हिमाल खबरपत्रिका

Kathmandu's denizens have long battled chronic issues related to transportation, polluted air, waste management, and shortages of energy and drinking water.

For those of us who can afford it, inverter and generators, private transportation and water tankers are easy alternatives to long power cuts, overcrowded public transports and scarcity of drinking water. But in case of air pollution, we cannot purchase fresh air to breathe.

Whether rich or poor, air pollution is a problem common to all and the only solution is for everyone to pitch in and minimise its effects. Keeping in mind the widespread problems faced by residents in the capital, we the CA members representing Kathmandu recently wrote to the Prime Minister about the pollution hazards as well as the solutions.

Whilst our collective

effort is still on, the Liveable Kathmandu campaign recently organised an interaction program on air pollution. According to research conducted by Ram Prasad Regmi, Kathmandu's bowl-shaped valley has a unique topographic feature that promotes temperature inversion, trapping pollutants in a surface layer of air. As temperatures increase in the afternoon, a fresh afternoon breeze blows away the polluted air towards the hills to the east, affecting people in the area too.

The unique topography and wind movement of the valley is completely natural and thus out of our control. So does that mean we are to throw up our hands and do nothing? We created air pollution and we can clean it up.

Liveable Kathmandu has conducted studies, research, and discussions that have helped the CA representatives from Kathmandu better understand the problems and motivated us to maximise our efforts to minimise the level of air pollution in the Valley.

Gas for the president

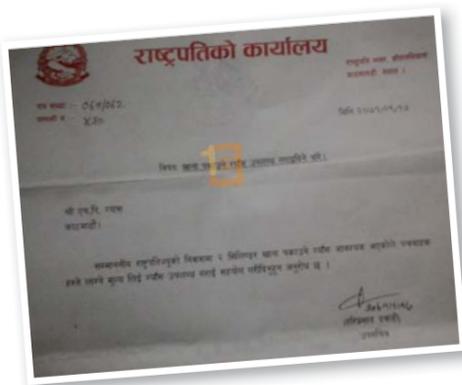
Letter sent by the President's office, *Pahilopost.com*, 6 January

President's Office
Shital Niwas
Kathmandu Nepal

Letter No: 061/062
Registration No: 632
Date: 2071/09/17

Re: To supply cooking gas

To: HP Gas Kathmandu



The residence of the Honourable President requires two cylinders of cooking gas immediately. As such we request you to provide the bearer of this letter the gas in return for the appropriate amount of money.

(signed)
Hari Duwadi
Deputy Secretary



Gloves: Strikes, Shutdowns
Table: Consensus

कान्तिपुर

Batsayan in Kantipur, 1 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“The whistle has been blown and the game is on.”

Madheshi People's Right Forum Chairman Upendra Yadav after a meeting with NC leaders at Baluwatar on Tuesday. *himalkhabar.com*, 6 January



DEVAKI BISTA

Coffee or tea?

Himal Khabarpatrika, 4 January

हिमाल खबरपत्रिका

If you can't go get a cup of coffee, a cup of coffee will come to you. These walking coffee vendors of The Tea House can be found in Thamel and Jhanchhe carrying two thermos flasks and plastic cups in shoulder harnesses selling hot beverages to passers-by. The students earn some pocket money and the company donates Rs 0.50 to a Day Care Centre in Thimi. Work starts at 6AM and goes on until 4PM, and the students sell four flasks of coffee and tea every day. At the moment the Tea House has ten student vendors. The response has been so good it plans to have vendors sell the beverages at the airport, Patan, Swayambu and the Kalanki Bus Park. This mobile tea-coffee service is the idea of Ashok Bajracharya, who was inspired by My One Business in South Africa. Says Nabina Rajbahak, who studies in Grade 12: "I like the job as I get to earn some money, meet people and it is also a social service."



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Mon-Sun 10:00AM-6PM

नागरिक

दैनिक

तपाईंको

आखबार

रोजको

उपहार

नागरिक रोज्नु भयो,
अब रोज्ने पालो
उत्कृष्ट उपहारको



नागरिक दैनिकको वार्षिक ग्राहकसँगै प्राप्त गर्नुहोस् तपाईं आफैले रोज्नुभएको उपहार ।



हेयर ड्रायर



इलेक्ट्रिक हिटर



लिनट रिमुभर



इलेक्ट्रिक सेभर



इलेक्ट्रिक ट्रिमर



कम्बल

हामी आउँदैछौं तपाईंको घरदैलोमा फेरि एकपटक

ग्राहक बन्नको लागि

CIR टाइप गरी ५२२५ मा SMS गर्नुहोला वा टोल फ्रि नं. १६६००९२५५५ सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्
बुटवल: ९८५७०९०४९३, ९८४७४२६३८८, मौरहवा: ९८०६९९३५०५, चितवन: ९८४५९५९७३७
नेपालगञ्ज: ९८५८०२९००, ०८९-५५९२९८, विराटनगर: ९८४५९९०७३४, ०२९-५२४९०५,
पोखरा: ९८५६०२२७२२, ०६९-५४०३९०, हेटौँडा: ०५७-५२३६४९
वा नजिकको पत्रिका पसलमा सम्पर्क राख्नुहोला ।

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What will be will be

If the number of arsetrologers descending upon us these days from Down South is any indication, then this country is heading towards a glorious sunset.

Anthropologists have long been convinced that only when a people develop an extraordinary interest in their own future do they strive for betterment. One thing we now know for sure, last time we checked, is that Nepal has a future, we just don't know what kind of future it is. And that is why the invasion of soothsayers, each more famous than the other according to Aajtak Tv, is a welcome development. We need these foreign zodiacal consultants to help narrow the trade deficit with Nepal so we can better prepare ourselves to deal with untoward incidents perpetrated by miscreants in the coming months.

Our own expertise in the arena of futurology is comparatively insignificant. Peptic ulcers being Nepal's national disease, we are more preoccupied with the here and now. No doubt, when it comes to our tummies we are the world's foremost authorities on gastronomy, gastrophysics and gastrology. But it is in astrology that we lag behind the rest of the world. For comparison, just look at the rapid strides our next-door neighbours, India and China have taken in the high-tech field of foretelling the future. India is the world leader in firtune-telling, while China is the fortune-cookie superpower of the world.

Every country has a strategic need to be able to predict what will happen day after tomorrow. In Nepal, it is of critical importance that we know what will happen on 22 January. Forewarned is forearmed. And our motto, should be: "When you have a horoscope, you don't need a telescope." The sooner we realise that our nation's destiny is governed by the position of the constellation Scorpio vis-a-vis the Planet Jupiter and develop our own indigenous expertise in stargazing, the better it will be for all concerned. But till that time,



alas, we will have to rely on foreigners to foretell our destiny.

Some of the asstrologers currently in the capital can allegedly make extraordinarily accurate predictions by reading the faces of clients, examining their belly buttons, and measuring the size of their private sectors. They don't even need to consult our horoscopes. Wow. If you are worried about remarriage, divorce, the fate of the new constitution, or even your peptic ulcers, you can have your future, however dire, foretold.

Nations, too, have horoscopes. And in these uncertain times it is good to know what is pre-ordained, so that we can all sit back and relax, safe in the knowledge that what will be, will be. We have here in our possession a leaked classified copy of Nepal's horoscope, and in the national interest we reprint it below in the strictest confidence provided you keep it yourselves because it is a military secret which, if it falls into the wrong

hands, could undermine our national sovereignty and territorial integrity:

'With Mars in mid-heaven in Nepal and closest to Earth than it has ever been since the days of the Neanderthal Man, we are looking at a lot more monkeying around in the Himalaya. The current Libra-Aries opposition is identical to their placement during the Peloponnesian War in 476 BC when the plague struck Athens and Rome sacked Carthage. But, not to worry, all is hunkydory for the 22nd because of a Neptune-Uranus conjunction in the 7th. There is nothing that can go wrong, because nothing is going on.'



The Ass

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