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ANTI-CLIMAX

There was nothing really sacrosanct about 22 January. Politicians who set that self-imposed deadline could just as easily extend it late Thursday night. But the public's disillusionment is growing, and the question is how the parties can redeem themselves by salvaging the constitution from the political wreckage of the CA. The only way forward is to continue to talk and set a realistic new date for the first draft to be ready.

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DIWAKAR CHETTRI



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THE ANTI-CLIMAX

Readers following what was happening in Nepal earlier this week on social networking sites were in for a big surprise. It wasn't, as one might have expected, news and pictures of flying furniture on the floor of the Constituent Assembly that was trending, but Nepal's dramatic victories over The Netherlands and Canada in the ICC League Division Two cricket tournament in Namibia.

Just goes to prove the point that although the capital and towns across Nepal were terrorised off the streets by strikes, and the national media splashed photographs of CA members throwing chairs around, most Nepalis couldn't be bothered about the debate over the content of the new constitution. This apathy was also reflected in the Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey, the results of which were published in this paper last week.

The vandalism on the floor of the Constituent Assembly on Monday night, would have made a jaded public even more cynical about the shenanigans of the opposition. It has been eight years since the Maoists descended from the mountains to join the political mainstream, but the comrades still haven't weaned themselves from their tactics of intimidation and violence.

The opposition 31 parties are being led by one man's paranoia about the wages of sin. The obstacle to framing a new constitution is not just federalism. It is also Pushpa Kamal Dahal's need to ensure that he has immunity from prosecution for war crimes and embezzlement of state funds meant for his guerrillas. And he can only have that immunity if he is president. There is also the strategic interest of neighbours about how future provinces will affect river projects on the Kosi and Karnali. That is what the behind-the-scene bargaining till the last moment on Thursday was all about.

Having lost in the elections of November 2013, and with his party in tatters, Dahal has been playing the identity card and trying to foment discord and disharmony for support. Had he read the writing on the wall (84% of those polled

The obstacle to framing a new constitution is not just federalism. Pushpa Kamal Dahal also needs to ensure he has immunity from prosecution for war crimes and embezzlement of state funds meant for his guerrillas.



in the Survey were against his shutdowns) he would have understood that such tactics don't work in Nepal anymore. But he doesn't care because he derives his power now from his nuisance value. The people are fully aware that this is a desperate attempt by the Maoist party to be relevant, and they are using the only language they have ever known: terror and violence.

After seeing the tidal wave of negative feedback on social media and in the press, the party partly backtracked

on Wednesday by admitting that "lapses" had occurred. This debate is not, as some members of the international community and pink idealists seem to naively believe, about an inclusive constitution. Things are much murkier beneath the surface.

Piecing together events leading up to Monday night's showdown, it is now clear that both sides were playing brinkmanship. The NC-UML coalition, egged on by hotheads within the two parties and frustrated by Maoist backtracking and stonewalling, had been trying to use their combined strength to unilaterally bulldoze through a constitution draft. There was no way the Maoist-Madhesi alliance of smaller opposition parties, which have been cornered, would allow this to happen without losing face.

The lesson for the future of constitution-writing is that this has to be a two-track process governed by both a spirit of consensus and political consultation. The terms 'give-and-take' and 'win-win' have become so threadbare with overuse that they don't mean anything anymore, but they are important nevertheless. Only through compromise can a new constitution be written. All indications are that those compromises were within reach in meetings on Sunday evening, and there was optimism in the air.

Something happened that night that made the Maoist-led alliance to backtrack. And it was probably the Dahal factor. The NC-UML then started preparing the process of voting point-by-point in the CA on the draft, when pre-designated Maoist CA members ran amok in an exercise of calculated mayhem. There is no doubt that this was premeditated, deliberate and desperate attempt to stop a constitution with feigned righteous indignation over exclusion.

The 22 January deadline was an anti-climax, the question now is how best to salvage the constitution from the political wreckage of the CA. The only way forward is to continue the dialogue, draw out a realistic new CA timetable for the first draft to be ready, say sorry to the people, and not give in to blackmail by former revolutionaries who will stop at nothing.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

PEOPLE AND CONSTITUTION

I am always impressed with the maturity, consistency and common sense of the Nepali people as has been reflected in the Himalmedia public opinion surveys over the years ('The people matter', Editorial, #741). If our leaders were genuinely responsive to ordinary citizens' views and sentiments, our political impasse could easily be turned into an opportunity to build a prosperous, egalitarian and democratic nation. As this editorial says, you can't fool all the people all the time, and hopefully, the day is not too far off when ordinary people's voices and views will prevail.

KG

Your last paragraph hits the nail on the head: "Public opinion polls are irrelevant in a country where public opinion doesn't matter to the leaders who think they can get power through street agitation." Just look at the response to the question on bandhs: 80 per cent of people oppose to it but the Maoist and Morcha leaders don't care. Along with disrupting daily lives of Nepalis, they have now resorted to vandalising government property.

KiranL

Why wasn't this poll also conducted in Tarai and Himalayan region? Because of this, I can't take the result seriously. And when you say that it reflects the opinion of Nepali society per se, it starts to become farcical.

Farci

Himalmedia, controlled by Kathmandu elite is totally biased, and hence the 'opinion poll' result isn't credible ('Poll data,' nepalitimes.com). @Lohars5

When people don't get the answers they expect, they begin to cry foul. @neosperrine

Every Nepali by now knows that the corrupted netas of Nepal only care for their own well-being ('This is what we think', Om Astha Rai, #741). While common Nepalis are worried about how to put food on their tables, Dahal and Co. are busy calling bandhs and hartals, crippling our already crippled economy.

Mahesh

A constitution is the fundamental law that basically governs almost all aspects of a country ('Who cares about constitution', Om Astha Rai, #741). Every aspect that you have mentioned are secondary needs, that can be properly addressed once we have a constitution. So, to say Nepalis don't have any concern towards constitution writing is totally false. However, this might be true in context of those uneducated people who don't understand the meaning of the word 'constitution'.

Sabin Karki

The common Nepali is hardly part of the constitution writing process ('Beyond the deadline', Anurag Acharya, #741). Those who are writing it have no public standing. It's a

terrible situation. I see no hope for this nation with the current breed of public servants. The reason being that they are doing anything but 'serving' the people.

Namah

What makes Anurag Acharya think that secularism, federalism and republicanism are 'irreversible'? Has he not seen this paper's own opinion poll? Or does he not think that the wishes of the Nepali people matter at all in promulgating the new Constitution?

Guest

In a country where there is no local government, (thank Deuba for that), a few evil men want to write a constitution for 30 million Nepalis without their involvement or input. It began with a sham election, and the fracas continues.

Damodar

WORLD BANK REPORT

As a psychologist, funder of a Nepali NGO, and a foreign developer, I can identify with all that's mentioned in the report ('Mind, society, behaviour', Ashutosh Tiwari, #741). A telling paragraph is in the final chapter that describes how an NGO education program completely outperformed a government program in Kenya. Nepal government and the huge bilateral donors need to wake up to this reality.

Brian Metters

EARTHQUAKE

While there is nothing to disagree about the text, I could not but help comment

about the accompanying 'pencil building' image ('On shaky ground', Dhanvantari by Buddha Basnyat, #741). Happened to see similar buildings in Sinjuku, Tokyo, and our tour guide informed this was the result of exorbitantly high land cost. Japanese 'pencils' though considered as bad examples are more robustly built and hence much safer than those we have here.

Armugam

DAUGHTERHOOD

Congratulations to Feby Boediarto for a very sensitively done and truthfully told image profiles of Nepali fathers and their daughters ('Daughterhood', Feby Boediarto, #741). And yet we have one of the most gender-unequal laws. Don't politicians have daughters?

Emmy

Great photos and sentiments, but wish there was some more soul searching by the fathers beyond 'I love my daughter and daughters are Laxmis in Hindu culture.' I also found the line at the very end very bothersome: 'daughters are the property of their parents.' Can we not be anyone's property please?

RT

CORRECTION

Due to an editorial error, Nepali Times carried incorrect information of an event ('Women in concert', page 12, #741) on Women's Day from last year.

Times

THIS WEEK



Most liked on Facebook

On shaky ground by Buddha Basnyat (33 likes)



Most shared on Facebook

Opposition vandalise CA by Bikram Rai (13 shares)



Most popular on Twitter

On shaky ground by Buddha Basnyat (17 retweets, 17 favourites)



Most visited online page

Daughterhood by Feby Boediarto (1298 views)



Most commented

Himalmedia Public Opinion Survey 2015 by Ayesha Shakya (13 comments)

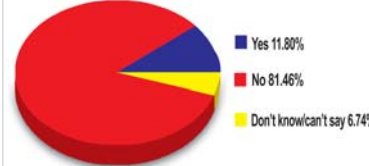
Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #742

Q. Will the constitution be drafted by 22 January?

Total votes: 178



Weekly Internet Poll #743
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who do you blame for missing the January 22 deadline?

Better later than never

The failure to meet the deadline is not a dead-end

There was a familiar feeling on Thursday evening like it had all happened before. And indeed it had on 29 May 2012 when we missed the previous constitution deadline.

There were the protesters waving flags on Baneswor intersection, streets barricaded with concertina wire, breathless live tv coverage from the CA



ANALYSIS
Om Astha Rai

premises late into the night. Rumours swirled that top leaders were in a huddle and nearing an agreement, only for those hopes to be dashed.

The difference this time was that 22 January was a self-imposed deadline, and the CA's tenure actually extends for three more years. The failure to meet the deadline, therefore, is not a dead-end.

The blame game was in full swing throughout Thursday as the ruling NC-UML coalition accused the Maoist-Madheshi alliance and vice-versa for the impasse.

"Since the 22 January deadline has been missed, the CA had to amend rules of procedures and announce a new timeframe,"



KENJI KWOK

said Purna Man Shakya, a constitution expert. "There was no other option."

Because of the vandalism within the CA and violence on the streets, however, it was the opposition that was on the defensive. It tried to stop the NC-UML-RPP from using its dominance in the CA to put the constitution to a vote by disrupting proceedings.

Constitutional lawyer Bipin Adhikari said the attempt to form a questionnaire committee in the CA must be revived. "A consensus can be forged after initiating this

process, there will always be room for negotiation," he added.

In the end, 22 January passed like any other day. Although the 31-party alliance says it represents the interests of marginalised communities, it is led by UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who is himself marginalised from politics.

The defeat of his party in the November 2013 election, its vertical split, his own intense rivalry with second-man Baburam Bhattarai, going ahead with unpopular strikes, as well as the perception within his party that

he has siphoned money meant for his guerrillas have weakened him. Public opinion polls show him trailing behind second-wrung leaders of the other parties.

Dahal has therefore used identity politics and appointed himself the leader of the oppressed and marginalised. But this is a shaky alliance, since his party and the Madheshi groups do not really have much in common ideologically. Baidya's Maoist faction which boycotted elections and is not even in the CA, but is a member of the 31-party alliance, is even more distant from the

Madheshi groups. The negotiations have therefore come down to bargaining for a power-sharing deal in the coming months. Madheshi leaders, most importantly Bijay Kumar Gachhedar have been negotiating to be a part of a new government.

Many analysts, even those sympathetic to the Maoists, say that Dahal feels isolated and blames the NC-UML and others for trying to take all the credit for the peace process and the constitution. "He'd rather sabotage it if he is going to be left out," one insider told us.

What gives credence to this theory is that on Sunday night the top leaders had agreed on most points of contention in the new constitution.

On Thursday evening, CA Chair Nembang tried one last time to salvage the situation by getting the four top leaders to issue a face-saving announcement by apologising to the people and extending the deadline. UCPN (M) ideologue Baburam Bhattarai tried to appear statesmanlike and said: "All political parties were at fault, and we should say sorry to the Nepali people."

Political analyst Nilambar Acharya said, "Setting a new timeframe is the only alternative and we must aim to announce a new constitution on Republic Day on 28 May, or even before."

Top leaders should no longer bypass the CA and negotiate behind closed doors about secret power deals, Acharya warned: "If they do, they should formally inform all lawmakers about what they discussed. That way the constitution process will be more transparent." 🇳🇵

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Pass the preamble

Sign on what you have agreed to and move on

On many occasions, the UCPN (Maoist) leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai have accused their political opponents and media and civil society whom they deem as class enemies of indulging in “Goebbels-style” propaganda.



THE DEADLINE Damakant Jayshi

That's a bit rich for comrades for whom facts have never stood in the way of an argument.

The latest lie is that the Maoist party had more than a two-thirds majority in the last Constituent Assembly, but did not press home that advantage because they wanted a constitution by consensus. If it wasn't so serious, this deliberate truth-bending would be really funny.

Here is a breakdown of the strength in the last CA of those parties which were opposed to UCPN (M) and Madhesi Morcha's

idea of federal structure: NC-115, CPN-UML-108, CPN-ML-9, RPP-8, RJP-3, RPP-Nepal-4, Rastriya Jan Morcha-4. This comes to 251. Even if we concede that all the rest were in favour of the then ruling coalition's idea of state restructuring, the number does not cross 350.

UCPN (M) Chairman Dahal claimed that he had the support of nearly 420 CA members in the last assembly. That is 70 more than the actual number. He and others claim that the Janajati and Madhesi CA members from NC and the UML had lent their support to the Maoist party on their idea of federalism.

Stalin was used to airbrushing history and removing inconvenient facts and people from history. What can you expect of his disciples in Nepal?

Let's recap. After the kind of discussions we witnessed inside and outside the CA in the last few months before it was dissolved in 2012, it was clear that federalism was going to be the most prominent issue for elections a year later.

The UCPN (M) and their Madhes-based allies were so sure

of getting their idea of federalism endorsed by the majority of the people that they mentioned in their election manifestos that they would adopt the democratic process of voting to decide the constitution matters if the parties failed to strike a consensus. That promise has been conveniently forgotten.

If the parties are to decide everything outside the assembly, why hold another election for the assembly to draft the constitution? If the idea was to get it endorsed by an elected assembly, the parties could have reached an agreement on contentious issues, hold the election and then get it passed by an overwhelming majority. The idea was to have the constitution by an assembly representative of the people of Nepal.

Dahal, Bhattarai and company should have the honesty to admit that the people have rejected the idea of federalism as envisaged by the Maoist and Madhes-based parties. But, of course, that is too much to ask. Most prominent



agreement between the NC, the UML, the UCPN (M) and the Madhesi Morcha be adopted for implementation. That agreement had proposed 11 multi-identity states, including five in the Tarai and left the naming of the provinces to state legislatures. At that time, they opposed it vehemently, preferring to dissolve the CA instead. The NC and the UML proposed some alternatives but they were rejected as well. The Maoist-Madhesi strategy now that they don't have a majority in the CA is to prevent this House to pass any constitution.

But the alternatives are worth re-considering, and it will save the face of all and also give time to discuss the subject of federal restructuring which has aroused so much passion.

One alternative could be to pass the Preamble of the constitution containing the principles to which the currently warring political forces have committed to – a democratic republic which is federal and secular and one which guarantees independent judiciary, equality of all people, press freedom, including the freedom of speech. If there is willingness, they could also pass the agreed contents.

There are possibilities and opportunities to move forward. Grand-standing and bargaining for power will not help. @damakant

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The rise and fall of the world's poorest nations

THALIF DEEN
in NEW YORK

The world's 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – a special category of developing nations created by the General Assembly in 1971 but refused recognition by the World Bank – have long been described as the 'poorest of the poor' in need of special international assistance for their economic survival.

But only three – Botswana, Cape Verde and the Maldives – have so far 'graduated' from being classified as an LDC to a developing nation, based primarily on their improved social and economic performance. Nepal has given itself the target of attaining that status by 2022.

At a UN-sponsored ministerial meeting of Asia-Pacific nations in Kathmandu last month, four more LDCs (namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia and Laos) were singled out as countries on the 'threshold of graduation' based on their recent economic and social indicators. And as economies improve, some predict that at least six more countries (Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Samoa, Angola and Equatorial Guinea) are likely to be forced out of the ranks of LDCs, possibly by 2020 or beyond.

But this outlook may be premature due to several factors, including the impact of the global economic recession, the long-term effects of the decline in oil prices, reduced purchasing power due to

falling national currencies, and in the case of Africa, the spread of Ebola.

A meeting in Istanbul in 2011 set an objective of graduating 50 per cent of LDCs out of the group by the year 2020. "But this mechanical setting of a target for graduation is impractical and has the potential of undesirable tension for development cooperation at national and global levels," said Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, the first UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs.



The foremost objective of graduation should be to bring LDCs out of poverty and their structural handicaps, he noted. But given the current distressing situation in most of the LDCs in both areas, it would be unwise for either the LDCs or their development partners to go towards realising this target.

LDCs represent the poorest and weakest members of the international community, comprising more than 880 million people and accounting for less than two per cent of global GDP. Fighting poverty in the LDCs is a key component to reach the UN's landmark 2015 Millennium

Development Goals.

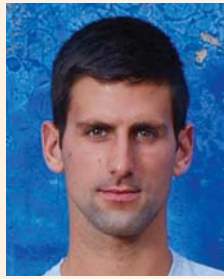
LDCs currently benefit from a range of special support measures from bilateral donors and multilateral organisations, and special treatment under regional and multilateral trade agreements. The benefits that will be lost or reduced due to LDC graduation include trade preferences, official development assistance (ODA) including development financing and technical cooperation.

Arjun Karki, coordinator of LDC Watch (a network of NGOs) said the aim of the 2011 Istanbul Programme of Action was to enable at least 24 LDCs to graduate by 2020, so the current proposals for graduation have not reached this level. Graduation is solely based on their income criterion (of Gross National Income per capita having exceeded at least twice the upper threshold of \$1,190) while they fare low in the human assets and economic vulnerability criteria.

Gyan Chandra Acharya (center, pic left) the current Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, told delegates at the ministerial meeting in Kathmandu: "The path towards graduation should not be an end in itself but should be viewed as a launching pad towards meaningful and transformative changes in the economic structures and the life conditions of people in graduated and graduating LDCs." (IPS) 🇳🇵

Novak's story

World number one tennis player and three-time Australian Open winner Novak Djokovic features in Austalian wine brand Jacob's Creek new 'Made By' film series. A three chapter-series, the film titled *Made By Determination*, was released in Melbourne last week and documents Novak's journey, from growing up in war-torn Serbia to his pivotal Grand Slam wins in the Australian Open and Wimbledon.



All clear

Air travellers on all Etihad Airways flights to the United States will now be able to experience the benefits of arriving in the US having precleared US Customs and Border Protection at Abu Dhabi Airport. US preclearance opened last week for the early morning EY103 to New York JFK and EY183 to San Francisco flights, both of which conveniently connect with inbound services from cities in India and the Indian Subcontinent.

App win

Ncell on Monday handed over prize money to the winners of Ncell App Camp 2014. Team ICT for Agriculture received a total prize amount of Rs 750,000 including category winner prize for Agriculture and the grand prize of Ncell App Camp 2014. It also received Ncell sponsorship to participate in similar overseas app camp. Opinio, RitiRiwaj, and Lipi are the other winners.



New partners

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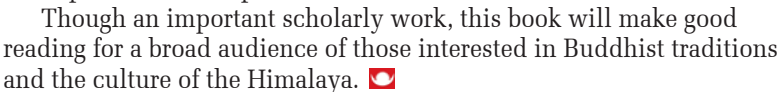
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A collection of personal care appliances including a hair dryer, a curling iron, a straightener, and a hairbrush, all resting on a pink towel.

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[illegible]

EVENTS



Art Market,

A place to sell and buy art in the form of paintings, prints, posters and design products.
7 February, 12 to 3pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01)5006665, contact@image-ark.com

Journeying for Art,

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

Saturday Bazaar,

Local organic producers come together to host this weekend market.
24 January, 1 to 5pm, Maan Nam, Naxal, (01)4415613, nepalgolfzone@hotmail.com

50 Sheep,

Screening of *I was worth 50 Sheep*, a tale of two sisters' struggle for human dignity in a war-torn country caught between ancient traditions and a modern world.
24 January, 5.30pm, Mohan Market Rooftop, Birganj, 984-5092943, mail@sanskriti.org.np

Open house,

Artists Binaya Humagain, Elsa Fraysee and Sabita Dangol's joint open house exhibition.
Till 24 January, Gallery MCube, Chakupat, Lalitpur, (01)5260110, gallerymcube@gmail.com

The story begins,

Exclusive workshops on jewellery making, corn husk dolls, felt product design from Nepali social entrepreneurs to mark the opening of The Shop with a story.
24 January, 11am to 6pm, Babar Mahal Revisited

Mountain Mystique,

A solo painting exhibition by Binod Pradhan.
Until 25 January, 10am to 6pm, The City Museum, Darbar Marg, info@thecitymuseum.org

Garbage to Garden,

Learn to turn household wastes into compost for your garden.
Rs 100, 25 January, 10.30am to 4pm, Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) Teku Office, RSVP info@cleanupnepal.org.np

IT Show,

For the latest electronics, gadgets, and more.
28 January to 2 February, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road, (01)5532586, sunil@ebizlinks.com.np



When words fail,

An exhibition by Hungarian artist and ex concentration camp prisoner, Sara Atzmon, to commemorate the International Holocaust Day.
28 January to 4 February, Alliance Française of Kathmandu, Teku, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com

Pulse,

A photographic exhibition by Päivi Maria Wells and the launch of collection of wearable arts designed by Naila Sattar.
Till 8 February, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark, Kulimha Tole, Lalitpur, (01)5006665, contact@image-ark.com



Pacotille,

A silent play for young audience with handheld human size puppets.
23 January, 11am and 3pm, Alliance française of Kathmandu, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com

DINING



Alice Restaurant,

Step in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental and Japanese cuisine.
Gairidhara, (01)4429207

Valentine night,

A free rose and a free glass of hot mulled wine followed by a free Irish coffee on Valentine's Day in a balloon filled dining room.
14 February, K-too Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel, (01)4700043.

Aalishan,

For mouth-watering kebabs, flavourful curries and delicious biryanis. Live music on Fridays.
Jhamsikhel, (01)5542032



Chopstix,

Savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress.
Kumaripati, (01)5551118, info@chopstix.com.np



La Casita de Boudhanath,

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Boudha, 981-3614384

Magic Beans,

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Sherpa Mall, Darbar Marg, (01)4230914

Chez Caroline,

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Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070

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दैनिक उपहार

१ जनालाई टि-सर्ट, गोपीकृष्ण 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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MUSIC



Albatross live,

Kathmandu's favourite rock band performs their last concert for the year before taking a short hiatus. 24 January, 7.30pm, Capital Grill, Bhatbhateni, (01)4428426

Blues & Booze,

A live musical night with the band Double Trouble.

23 January, 6pm, Maan Nam, Naxal, (01)4415-613, nepalgolfzone@hotmail.com

Wave Tour,

Wave Magazine celebrates its 20th anniversary with a series of concerts at three different cities.



Mulchowk,

Select from set Ala-carte menu or regular menu while enjoying classical fusion, folk music and instrument music by Mul band.

Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4259801

Rs100, 24 January (Chitwan), 31 January (Kathmandu) and 7 February (Pokhara), (01)5010773, info@wavemag.com.np

Book and brass,

An open air concert by Everest Brass Band to celebrate the book release of Joe Niemczura's *The Sacrament of Goddess*.

24 January, 2 to 4pm, Patan Darbar Square, Mangal Bajar, Patan

GETAWAYS

Park Village Resort,

Far away from the madding crowd, yet so close to the city.

Budhanilkantha, (01)4375280, pvh@wlink.com.np

Shivapuri Village,

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Patiswara, Shivapuri National Park, (01)4017725, 985-1034141, info@shivapuri.com

Mum's Garden Resort,

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Barahi Jungle House,

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Andrauli, West Chitwan, (01)4429820, bjl@barahi.com

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Gokarna, (01)4910193

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THE HEIGHT OF SACRIFICE

The story of the Nepalis who showed extraordinary courage in rescuing fellow climbers on K2 in 2008

DEEPAK ADHIKARI

American climber and author Freddie Wilkinson’s book *One Mountain Thousand Summits: The Untold Story of Tragedy and True Heroism on K2* pieces together an accurate account of the 2008 tragedy on the world’s second highest peak. The book is replete with dramatic rescues and selflessness as narrated by two Nepali survivors, Pemba Gyalje Sherpa and Chhiring Dorje.

Eleven climbers lost their lives that day: three South Koreans, two Pakistanis, two Nepalis and one each from Serbia, Norway, France and Ireland. The two Nepalis survived.

At 8,611m, K2 is described by mountaineers as ‘savage mountain’ or ‘killer peak’. One in four climbers who have attempted the summit over the years, never made it back. The story of the 2008 K2 expeditions has also been told in *Buried in the Sky* by Peter

Zuckerman and Amanda Padoan where Chhiring Dorje rescues fellow-Nepali Pasang Lama.

In 2008, a medley of climbers from Italy, Netherland, United States, Serbia, South Korea, Denmark, France, Norway, among others, set out from high camp for the summit. Disaster struck on their way down the notorious Bottleneck, where icefalls had swept away the fixed ropes, leaving 12 climbers returning to Camp IV stranded in treacherous, avalanche-prone terrain.

The unfolding high-altitude drama was breaking news for the international media. In the rush to be first, half-baked and sensationalised news reduced the event to mountaineering clichés and it was compared to the 1996 Everest disaster chronicled in *Into Thin Air*. The climbers were portrayed as irrational and irresponsible, ill-equipped to tackle the challenge.

Wilkinson interviews European and Nepali survivors and pieces together what happened. A topnotch climber and guide

ON A HIGH: Pemba Gyalje Sherpa on the summit of K2 with his climbing partner Gerard McDonnell, who died on the descent.



Freddie Wilkinson, 35, climber and author of *One Mountain Thousand Summits* speaks to Deepak Adhikari

Why did you decide to write the book? They say history is written by the victors, and the history of high altitude mountaineering has been almost entirely written from the perspective of the foreign climbers who visited the Himalaya to climb and explore. When disaster struck on K2 in 2008, the media focused on the accounts of several western survivors -- but these guys, by their own admission, were so exhausted and focused on their personal survival they had incoherent memories of what was happening around them. I realised

that the only way to really understand what happened would be from the perspective of the Nepali climbers who were there.

What’s the lure of the world’s second highest peak? K2 used to be one of the biggest challenges in mountaineering -- it’s a beautiful mountain, steep and unforgiving. The lure of climbing such a mountain is the same as any complex and risky long-term undertaking: there are logistical challenges, physical and mental challenges, and it takes many months or years to realise the dream of standing on the summit.

It’s been six years since the tragedy on K2. Do you think any lessons have been learned from the disaster?

“Another big accident is a matter of time”

As an alpinist, I personally feel it’s inappropriate to attempt any mountain if you lack the skills to fix the ropes and establish the route yourself. Yet the normal routes on all of the 8,000 meters, including K2, are busier than ever, and the vast majority of climbers on these routes are totally reliant on commercial infrastructure to survive. Sadly, I think that under these circumstances another big accident is just a matter of time. The most productive thing the climbing community can do is focus on providing better training and support for Nepali and Pakistani mountain guides.

In the chapter called "Death in the Information Age", you write on how media’s hunger for instant story often leads to distortion of facts and misinformation. How can mountaineering journalism be more nuanced? Mountaineering is an incredible sport in that it brings together people from many different cultures and backgrounds, often in serious, life-or-death situations. At its best, mountain journalism should strive to understand these people -- who they are,

their goals, their backgrounds and the cultural baggage they carry with them to the mountains.

What’s the future of mountaineering for a country like Nepal? What’s your suggestion on reforming the sector? I firmly believe that lasting change can only come from the local community itself -- it can’t be implemented by a bunch of well-meaning but misguided foreigners. Still, it would be great to see the Government re-invest a majority portion of the annual revenue from peak fees to create a disaster relief fund as well as more professional educational opportunities. I also think the liaison officer system should be completely overhauled to form a group of mountain rangers, and an independent search and rescue call center needs to be established. As we saw after the avalanche last spring, there are many business owners, trade organisations and government officials who try to speak on behalf of those working in the mountains. Real change will only happen when the Nepali mountain community can find a way to effectively organise and speak for itself.



COURTESY PEMBA GYALJE

himself, Wilkinson does justice to the topic by going where the story takes him. He interviews the families of the climbers who perished as they speak of the dreams and motivations of their relatives.

One Mountain Thousand Summits delves deep into the history of modern mountaineering from the Industrial Revolution to the British 'conquest' of Mt Everest in 1953. The spread of the global mass media coincided with this spirit of adventure, and Wilkinson chronicles the competition in the media to sell the story ever since the first successful expedition to North Pole. There was a similar media frenzy after the first ascent of Mt Everest, and coverage of expeditions has been staple fare for international news agencies based in Kathmandu.

It was no different when Sherpas and European alpinists came to blows at Camp II two years ago, when an avalanche on the Khumbu Ice Fall killed 16 Nepali high altitude workers and blizzards on Annapurna killed 39 trekkers last year. Yet when three Nepali women climbed K2 last year, it didn't really make any international headlines. Wilkinson's book is as much a chronicle of the fateful two days on K2 as it is a critique of the new media menu and how it mishandles disasters.

Everest's first known victims were Sherpas: in 1922 seven Sherpas died in an avalanche while approaching the North Col. This perhaps underscores the risks inherent in mountaineering expeditions. Besides Pemba Gyalje and Chhiring Dorje, who emerge as the K2 heroes Wilkinson also talks about Jumik Bhote and Pasang Bhote, two Sherpas from Rolwaling



One Mountain Thousand Summits: The Untold Story of Tragedy and True Heroism on K2 by Freddie Wilkinson \$24.95, New American Library, Hardcover, 352 pages

region who died helping rescue members of the South Korean expedition.

While Wilkinson puts K2 in the context of mountaineering and the evolution of Nepal's Sherpa people as professional mountaineers, his account of contemporary Nepali history disappoints the reader. The Maoist insurgency and royal massacre are treated a bit simplistically, and his poor grasp of Nepal's history is a drawback.

Gerard McDonnell, the first Irish to summit K2 and a friend and climbing partner of Pemba Gyaje, is given ample space: from his passions for climbing and wilderness to the life in Alaska, while we get to know very little of the South Korean climbers. Aside from these quibbles, the book is a comprehensive and nuanced account of the tragedy on K2 and the extraordinary courage shown by the Nepalis involved. 🇳🇵



Pemba Gyalje Sherpa, 41, has climbed Mt Everest six times, but is little known outside the close-knit Sherpa and mountaineering community. After the K2 disaster he was hailed as a hero for his daring and selfless rescue mission. *National Geographic* named him Best Adventurer of 2008 and featured him in its cover of the year-end issue. Pemba also starred in the documentary, *The Summit*.

What do you remember of what happened that day on K2?

Pemba Gyalje Sherpa: It was an unfortunate incident. My mind is flooded with sad memories. The climbers got stuck on their descent after the summit, there was no way they could descend. Some of them were swept away by avalanches and others fell to their deaths.

How has the tragedy changed your life?

It was the biggest incident I have experienced on any mountain. I learned a lot from the tragedy. What happens when people from different background and culture with varying degree of climbing skills climb at high altitude. How people's capacity to make right decisions is impaired. I learnt how despite best efforts, one

The risk and reward

cannot control what happens high up on a mountain. I feel that I was lucky to survive it. I was in the best physical shape, which is why I could do the rescues. You have to be physically and mentally fit, and prepare well in advance to climb.

How have the lives of the Sherpas changed by mountaineering?

Earlier, high altitude mountaineering was considered an elite profession. Only those with technical skills and physical strength were drawn to it. But things have changed now. The perception is that anyone can do it. Generations of Sherpas have been employed in this sector. Many are drawn by economic benefits, others may be attracted by the thrill of it or some simply wanted to be there on the mountains. The risk is always there, you have to know how much you can take.

But how do you reconcile those risks with the rewards of high altitude work?

Ours is a country where hard work is neither respected nor rewarded. We have a tendency to devalue and under-appreciate

labour. Commercial mountaineering is run by foreigners as a business. Most climbers are foreigners so the business is under their control. It's natural, because the idea of mountaineering is a western import. We, on the other hand, are service providers. We don't do marketing, we don't look for clients. Very little of mountaineering dollars trickle down to us. So it's natural that we will suffer from this model. More dangerous than avalanches is how the budget for an expedition is sorted out. If you don't offer enough pay, experienced and skilled guides may not come on board. Less budget also means low quality gears and equipment, which ultimately hurts safety.

What's the future of Everest in the wake of cancellations last spring?

It was sad that expeditions got cancelled, but Everest will always be there. Expeditions on the Nepal side will continue to grow. We need to manage our mountains better and ensure safety. We must spread the message that we are well prepared for commercial expeditions.



This week, because I am travelling and therefore have a low attention span, I will be writing about *John Wick*, Keanu Reeves’ highly anticipated, slightly disappointing, action flick with art-house pretensions.

In all fairness to Reeves, whom I have had a sneaking fondness ever since I learnt that he played an excellent Hamlet on stage in



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

1995, *John Wick* (where Reeves plays the titular character, of course) is far from his worst role, especially as it requires a minimal amount of talking, and a maximum amount of action involving, guns, knives, driving fast cars, and a

tiny bit of interaction with cute puppies.

John Wick starts off with Reeves collapsed on a dock with a grievous wound to the gut, looking into his phone at a video of a beautiful woman who is teasing him lovingly. As the film flashes back, we learn that Helen (played all too briefly by the lovely Bridget Moynihan) has died after a long illness leaving Wick alone, devastated by the loss of the only good thing in his life – mainly because before his five happy years with Helen – Wick had been the hetman for a Russian crime syndicate in New York. That too, an extremely efficient one who earned himself the nickname “Baba Yaga” or “The Boogeyman” due to his ferocity and precision.

When circumstances conspire, slightly forcedly, in getting his car stolen and his puppy being maimed by Iosef (Alfie Allen), the good for nothing son of his former

mob boss, Wick goes ballistic, literally, stocking up on his arsenal to avenge a number of wrongs.

Personally, if you like stylised violence, I would advise you to watch all of the French director Jean-Pierre Melville’s works starting with *Le Samourai* (1967) and *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970), two of the most iconic works in cinema related to art-house action. His work was influenced in turn by American gangster flicks of that era, and starred the strikingly handsome Alain Delon in some of his most unforgettable roles.

John Wick’s influences from Melville are clear. Director Chad Stahelski is surely influenced by the perfectly lit, cool art deco interiors that are so much a part of Melville’s films, with their insouciant, almost cheeky, characters who are fascinating in their seeming opacity. Eventually, when Iosef turns up holed up in a club called the “The Red Circle” my guesses at the film’s influences were more or less vindicated (*Le Cercle Rouge* is translated as “The Red Circle”).

Action films are a dime a dozen these days, unfortunately most are less than mediocre. If you must, watch *John Wick*, but if you want to be riveted, watch Melville. Most likely you’ll never watch another action flick after that without a spark of nostalgia for the good old days. 🇳🇵

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■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



GOPEN RAI

NEW START: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala attends a program to celebrate Sonam Losar at Tundikhel on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAI

BREAKING BAD: CA members of the UCPN(M) vandalise property inside the CA hall protesting against Subas Nembang’s decision to initiate the process for vote on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

FOR EQUALITY: Maiti Nepal founder Anuradha Koirala participates in a rally demanding the new constitution grant citizenship through mothers near Babar Mahal on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

SOUTH ASIAN: Editor of *Himal Southasian* Kanak Mani Dixit (right) with author Rabi Thapa at the launch of the magazine’s new issue at the City Museum on Friday.

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Picturing Kathmandu's beat

Finnish photographer Päivi Maria Wells (*pic, bottom*) uses hand-held camera motions and long exposure that etch light and textures to give a blurry effect to her pictures.

In *Solitudes - Photographic reflections*, Wells' first solo exhibition held last May at Image Ark, she illustrated her childhood playgrounds-seashores and the forests in Finland- in an abstract way. The predominant grey tone of the series drew a melancholic atmosphere.

Wells' second solo exhibition *Pulse* on display at the same gallery attempts to show life around Kathmandu Valley. *Pulse* is the result of a two-year photographing process in Kathmandu.

"It was far from the quiet seashores where I used to find inspiration," she says. "However, it forced me out into the world."

The photographer considers this a unique experience. "Most photography I do is a continuous process that I carry with me," she explains. "But *Pulse* had a beginning and an end as I knew I would be leaving Nepal."

Wells' distinctive touch is easily recognisable through these blurred pictures. But the colourful outlines of Kathmandu and human silhouettes are easily noticeable. This time, the abstract landscapes leave space to form a sequence of movements.



Pulse awakens all the senses as it forces one into (re)discovering Kathmandu. The long exposure gives the right impression that Kathmandu is constantly abuzz. The softness of the outlines remind us that the capital also has its moments of peace. The vivid colours show how overwhelming Nepal can be.

While staring at "Rainy Day" visitors can feel the flow of the streets, nearly hearing the vehicle horns and the ringing bells. On the

other hand, "Prayer Flags" gives a soothing impression and "Boy" passes on much joy.


"The title *Pulse* was chosen as I attempted to capture the rhythm of the city: chaos, colours, the sounds and the non-stop," explains the photographer.

Wells has done an ingenious work putting her attentive eye on the country. Each picture of *Pulse* was taken after long and quiet period observing choks, squares and streets. When

REVIEW

taking photographs she allowed her camera to move but let the life come to her rather than chase after it. Many a times she returned back with no photographs.

Another part of the exhibition is the display of a few wearable art pieces by Naila Sattar with prints of Wells' pictures. "Päivi Maria Wells' photography has a quality of luminosity and space," says Sattar, "and I wanted to design a collection that reflected those qualities."

Päivi Maria Wells' *Pulse* is a stimulating exhibition, one that struck a resonance with this Kathmandu dweller. 

Stéphane Huët

Pulse
Image Ark Gallery
Patan Darbar Square
Runs till 8 February
10AM to 5PM
www.image-ark.com

Dhokaima Café

For a long time now Dhokaima Café has been serving diners this part of town. The cafe which is known for its laid back ambience and delicious desserts recently underwent a menu change.

Resting in the shade of a sprawling walnut tree, dining out in the scenic patio under the warm afternoon sun would be the select choice for a professional business meeting, or a nice company lunch, or a review in this case.

Though the menu offers many different cuisines ranging from Nepali to Italian and even Chinese, it was uncluttered and well-categorised, with ingredients that go into every dish clearly summarised.

However, not all the dishes were as they were described. The Ultimate Grilled Cheese Sandwich (Rs 219), touted on the menu to be filled with Nepali tomme cheese melting over harvest fresh tomatoes, basil and red chilli, did not have basil or red chilli inside.

Similarly, the taste of tandoori spices did not come through in the Tandoori Chicken Salad Sandwich (Rs 229), although the sandwich bread was crisp when it first arrived.



A whole sandwich dish comes with a side of fries, otherwise you could choose to have half a sandwich with a choice of soup that would cost Rs 259. The choices of soup include minestrone, cream of mushroom or hot and sour soup.

On the upside, the mains were delicious and filling, especially the Chinese main courses.

A standout dish was the Spicy Whole Fish (Rs 599), perhaps due to its sheer size. Fresh water Rahu fish, fried whole and gently stewed in a superb sauce of dried chilli, ginger, spring onion and dark soy sauce, it tasted authentically Chinese and is best shared amongst two to three.

Another appetising Chinese dish would be the Bak Choy with



mushrooms (Rs 299), served with either rice or noodles. Sautéed in a light soy and garlic sauce, this vegetarian dish was tasty and refreshingly light.

The pulled pork burger (Rs 399) was also filled with flavour from a rich spice and vinegar rub. Generous and hearty, the burger was packed with succulent pork chunks.

The Hamburger (Rs 379)




PICS: KENJI KWOK

was similarly served with a chunky meat patty, but it was just the right size. However, don't expect to be able to munch heartily on the burger using your bare hands - the burger bun tasted slightly stale and crumbled by the end of the meal.

If you're looking for something easy to eat, the Chicken Shashlik (Rs 399) would be it. The bite-sized chicken was grilled to perfection and was served with a light tomato-based barbeque sauce that complimented the chicken skewers and garden vegetables.

With so many options and cuisines to choose from, one can be spoilt for choice

when dining at the Dhokaima café.

Thus, seal the meal with a chocolate cake and any dining experience at the Dhokaima café would do no wrong. Desserts are truly the café's specialty. The chocolate cake (Rs 109) consists of layers of chocolate sponge that are not overbearingly sweet, thus allowing the top layer of chocolate ganache to introduce a smooth chocolate sensation that would satisfy any palate. Regulars also swear by the Dhokaima brownie with icecream. 

Cynthia Choo

How to get there: Dhokaima Café is located at Patan Dhoka.

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Cold viruses

The telltale signs of the arrival of the cold winter are sneezing, coughing, sore throat, and runny nose. Is it the lack of a hat or scarf that causes the common cold? Does the chilly air make people more prone to get sick? The belief is popular yet disputable.



SCIENCE BYTES
Roshan Karki

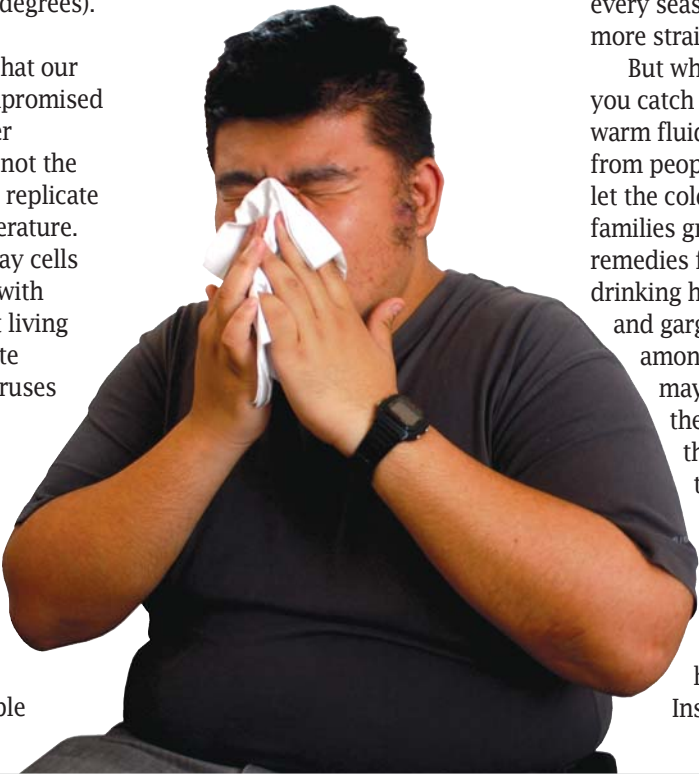
Rhinovirus (RVs), the primary cause of the common cold, affects nearly 10 to 40 per cent of the general population at a given time. RVs is responsible for a host of respiratory tract infections. It was believed that RVs thrive more efficiently at cooler temperature in

the nasal passages (33 degrees) than at a higher core body temperature (about 37 degrees).

Researchers at Yale University discovered that our immune system is compromised against viruses at cooler temperatures, and it is not the ability of the viruses to replicate more at a chillier temperature. A study where the airway cells of mice were infected with rhinovirus showed that living beings have lower innate immune response to viruses at a lower temperature. It was interesting that when the body's anti-virus defences were genetically removed, the virus could multiply at both lower and higher temperatures. Therefore it is reasonable

to assume that colder weather suppresses our immune system, making us more prone to catch a cold.

Despite the advancements that modern medicine has made, there is no cure for the common



cold. There are antihistamines that only suppress the symptoms of the cold such as runny nose and watery eyes. It is challenging to develop a vaccine against the common cold because there are 20 to 30 strains of RVs at a given time in any geographic area. In addition, every season scientists discover more strains of RVs.

But what should you do when you catch a cold? Just rest, drink warm fluids, keep your distance from people who are not sick and let the cold run its course. Our families grew up with several remedies for the cold such as drinking hot lemon with honey and gargling with salt water among others. These remedies may not cure the cold but they do definitely alleviate the discomfort caused by the virus.

Nepalis are quick to take antibiotics for the cold that is quite useless as antibiotics only kill bacteria and have no effect on viruses. Instead these antibiotics

may kill the good bacteria that we have in our bodies and the over usage of antibiotics has led to people being more resistant to them.

How then can we prevent ourselves from catching a cold? A sure yet impractical method would be to seclude yourself from all living beings. Other humanly possible precautions are washing one's hands carefully for 20 to 60 seconds, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands and keeping distance from people who have the cold. It is always helpful to dress warm when outside in the cold as it may prevent your body's temperature from lowering to a point where the RVs start vigorously multiplying in your nasal cavities leading to common cold.

It is impossible to avoid the common cold but there are ways to try to prevent it or not make it last as long. Listen to your mother the next time she asks you to wear a jacket before heading out in the cold, you will thank her later. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

iWant

The popularity and use of desktop computers might be on the wane with the advent of ultra-portable laptops and tablets, but nothing beats the good old solid feel and power of a top-notch machine on your desk, especially if that machine so happens to be the new Apple iMac with Retina 5K. The ultimate that Apple has to offer, the iMac with Retina 5K has it all -- a design that oozes ultramodern class, hardware specifications to satisfy even the pickiest of techies, and a 27" screen with 4x as many pixels as the standard iMac that is sure to take your breath away, every single time you turn it on. The screen is sharp and crisp with great image quality.

This thing of beauty follows the entire-



system-in-one design of the original 27" iMac, a razor-like 5mm thin at the edge, and an overall dashing sleek design consistent with Apple products. Flying Apple's trademark aluminum, the rear has four USB 3.0 ports, two Thunderbolt/Mini-DisplayPort connections, an SD card slot, Ethernet jack, and a headphone port. A wireless Apple keyboard and an Apple Magic mouse are also included in the box, to further enhance and accentuate the futuristic look and feel.

A stunning pristine screen is what the iMac with Retina 5K is really about — boasting double the resolution of a regular iMac, this invention's IPS screen possesses an astounding resolution of 5,120 pixels x 2,880 pixels (217 PPI), resulting in an incredibly detailed multimedia experience. However, low resolution media looks pixilated when expanded to normal viewing sizes.

The iMac with Retina 5K runs on Apple's OS X Yosemite, and is powered by a 3.5GHz quad-core Intel Core i5 (can be upgraded to Intel Core i7 for about USD 250) with 8GB of GDDR5 RAM (can be upgraded to 16GB for USD 200 or 32GB for USD 600) and an AMD Radeon R9 M290X graphics card with 2GB video memory, which should work excellently for beginners and can impress expert users. While a 1TB Fusion Drive should be more than enough storage for most users, it can be upgraded to a maximum 3TB Fusion Drive or a super fast 1TB SSD hard drive for a little extra cash. It also claims to use 30 per cent less power than its predecessors.

The iMac with Retina 5K is a best in all computer that is a bit pricey but has the features and technology to make it a brilliant investment, which should be of great news particularly for those in the video, music and image editing fields. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's Verdict: As with all Apple products, the iMac with Retina 5k does not come cheap and is priced at approx. Rs 300,000. But, for maintaining high standards, producing sharp image quality and huge storage space, it is worth the money.

साप्ताहिक खबरपत्रिका

हिमाल

ग्राहक योजना

१ कार्तिकदेखि



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

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Limits to toleration in a secular state

The debate about free speech and tolerance in France is relevant to the current discussion about secularism in Nepal

In the weeks after the attacks by Islamist militants on the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* there has been intense and often angry debate as to the limits to free speech and toleration in secular France, who defines them and why, and who really are the victims. The discussion is highly relevant to the debate over secularism in Nepal.



THE GADFLY
David Seddon

In a recent contribution Ali Abunimah reports that less than a week after the rallies in defence of free expression, French authorities have jailed a 16-year-old high school student for l'apologie du terrorisme ('defending terrorism'). He had posted on Facebook a mock *Charlie Hebdo* cover by the cartoonist Dedko, showing a young man of indeterminate ethnicity, religion and nationality holding up a copy of Charlie Hebdo of 2013 'Charlie Hebdo is shit. It doesn't stop bullets'.

The cartoon was closely modelled on an earlier one published by *Charlie Hebdo* in July 2013, which showed a Muslim protester against the military coup in Egypt being shot through a copy of the Quran he is holding. The text says, 'The Quran is shit. It doesn't stop bullets'. The recent cartoon is already widely available on the social media and was published on 7 January on the website of the controversial French comedian Dieudonné.

This arrest is just one of around 70 that have taken place in the last week, on the charge of 'defending terrorism'. It may seem surprising that French authorities can charge and jail people so quickly. But this is the result of a change in the law last November, in which 'defending terrorism' became a criminal offense, subject to fast-



track trials. Last week, France's Human Rights League reminded those concerned that when the change in the law was being debated, it had argued against it, as ineffective as regards security, dangerous for civil liberties and damaging to the credibility of the justice system. It said that these summary convictions vindicated its warnings.

Amnesty International reports that the crackdown follows a circular sent to prosecutors on 12 January by Justice Minister Christiane Taubira, instructing them that 'words or wrongdoing, hatred or contempt, uttered or committed against someone because of their religion must be fought and pursued with great vigour'. But the fight and the pursuit look highly partisan. Now, according to Ali Abunimah, 'anything mocking and denigrating Islam and Muslims is venerated as courageous free speech, while anything mocking those who engage in such

denigration – even using precisely the same techniques – can get you locked up'.

This week, rapper Saïdou (of the band Z.E.P.) and sociologist Saïd Bouamama will both be indicted in Lille for 'public insult' and 'incitement to discrimination, hate, or violence'. The prosecution was brought by a right-wing nationalist group, because of Bouamama's book *Nique La France* (Fuck France) and a Z.E.P. song with the same title. The song's refrain states: "Fuck France and its colonialist past, its paternalist smells, stench, and reflexes. Fuck France and its imperialist history, its capitalist walls, fortresses and delusions." Z.E.P., ironically, stands for "Zone d'expression populaire" – Popular Expression Zone. But irony is now apparently a crime in France – and freedom of expression apparently available only to some.

When prominent journalist Philippe Tesson declared



on Europe 1, one of France's biggest radio stations, that 'it's the Muslims who bring the shit to France these days', a private citizen reportedly brought a legal complaint against him for 'inciting racial hatred'. But the authorities have not charged him with a crime.

It is only a matter of time, worries Ali Abunimah, before the laws are used with renewed vigour against a whole range of speech that might upset the French state, especially by those who advocate for Palestinian rights and for the boycott of Israel, that might be seen as 'anti-semitic'. In the meanwhile, it is Muslims in France who are now both 'the enemies of free speech' and the victims of aggression. Already there have been reports of at least 83 Islamophobic threats and attacks in France since the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.

There are however, some, who blame *Charlie Hebdo* for a partisan position on 'free speech'. In 2008, a column by veteran

cartoonist Siné led to accusations of 'anti-semitism' and his sacking by *Charlie Hebdo* (although Siné successfully sued the newspaper for unfair dismissal. Today, ironically, it is mainly Jewish schools and synagogues that are protected by French troops, and there is a heightened concern about the growth of 'anti-semitism'. But in 2013, a piece by Olivier Cyran, a former journalist at *Charlie Hebdo*, traced the magazine's descent into 'an obsessive bigotry against Muslims in the years since the 11 September 2001 attacks'.

'The obsessive pounding on Muslims to which your weekly has devoted itself for more than a decade ... has powerfully contributed to popularising, among left-wing opinion, the idea that Islam is a major 'problem' in French society,' wrote Cyran. It contributed to the notion, he suggested, that demeaning Muslims was no longer the sole privilege of the extreme right, but was permitted by a 'right to offend', sanctified by secularism (laïcité).

In a recent article for *The Conversation*, Mayanthi Fernando, a professor of anthropology at University of California, has suggested that 'we should be wary of myths about French secularism and French citizenship being spun in the aftermath of the attacks'. She notes that despite its ostensible *laïcité*, the French state has always privileged some religious groups. But when Muslims ask for the same accommodations others receive: 'they are reminded that France is a secular country where proper citizenship requires separating religion from public life'.

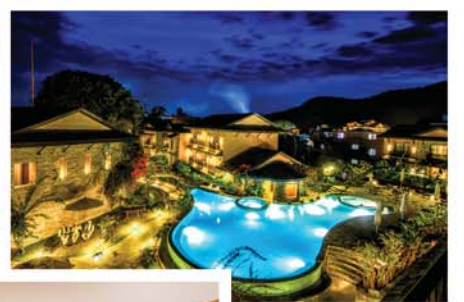
More generally, Joseph Massad argues, in his new book, *Islam in Liberalism*, that the American and European proponents of 'liberalism' are engaged in a campaign to remake Islam and Muslims in the image of liberal Protestant Christianity: 'Muslim resistance to this benevolent mission is represented as rejection of modernity and liberal values of freedom, liberty, equality, the right-bearing individual, democratic citizenship, women's rights, sexual rights, freedom of belief, secularism [and] rationality'. 🇹🇼 @pigreen

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Fax : +977.61.465809

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Arcadia Apartments, Thamel, Nepal
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ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

The growth of an unwelcome guest in Nepal

BUDDHA BASNYAT
and **HELLEN GELBAND**

Global concern about antibiotic resistance, along with resistance itself, is at an all-time high. In 2014 the World Health Organisation (WHO) officially recognised the need for a Global Action Plan for antimicrobial resistance and will adopt it in 2015.

The UK's Chief Medical Officer sounded the siren for all countries to address the problem. A report from Public Health England predicts that by 2050 antimicrobial resistance will cost up to \$100 trillion and kill 10 million people around the world each year. Even the 2014 Longitude Prize challenge is about antibiotic resistance. Echoes have been heard across the world, but almost exclusively from wealthy countries.

Nepal is one of only a few developing countries to have assessed antibiotic resistance and the factors associated with it. The Global Antibiotic Resistance Partnership (GARP)-Nepal, with its secretariat at the Nepal Public Health Foundation, released a sobering analysis last month to an assembly of clinicians, public health specialists, microbiologists, veterinary experts and others.

The evidence base regarding the extent of antibiotic resistance in Nepal today is scant, but

studies document high levels of resistance. In each of 10 recent studies of acute respiratory infections, more than half the cases analysed were resistant to first-line antibiotics. Most cases of bacterial diarrhoea were resistant to at least one drug in the four studies published since 2007, and one-third of cases in the largest study were resistant to the four top antibiotics for those bacteria. The story for bloodstream infections, sexually transmitted diseases and urinary tract infections was no better. The true picture may not be as bad as this evidence suggests because the studies were all done in hospitals, and on the sickest patients. Still, complacency is not an option.

Antibiotic resistance is evolution in action, a natural process that occurs in response to all antibiotic use. If use is reduced, however, as it has been in some European countries, effectiveness can return. This may mean that the current antibiotic pharmacopeia can be managed intelligently to maintain effective antibiotic coverage for decades.

The range of actions that can help to preserve antibiotic effectiveness surprised many attendees at the Kathmandu meeting. It is not only changes in hospital practice or by medical specialists that can help, but broadly, anything that reduces the need for antibiotics reduces antibiotic resistance. Vaccines

that prevent bacterial diseases (and even viral diseases that are inappropriately treated with antibiotics or pave the way for bacterial infections) help. This includes vaccines that prevent pneumonia, diarrhoea, influenza and other common illnesses. Clean water and sewerage also reduces the burden of disease and the need for antibiotics.

Also largely unrecognised is the widespread use of antibiotics to prevent disease in poultry, cattle and other farm animals. Better sanitation on farms reduces the need for this. However, Nepal has no regulations governing antibiotics in animals, and farmers may not have the information they need to make the change.

Hospitals and healthcare workers are the front lines. Hospitals are notoriously dangerous places, and hospital-acquired infections are among the most resistant and are too often carried from patient to patient by the doctors and nurses treating them. Perhaps the cheapest and simplest intervention is also one of the most effective: hand washing between patients. Even in the best Nepali hospitals, hand cleansing between patients is not standard practice.

As for antibiotic prescribing, healthcare workers are as guilty as the self-prescribing public. Antibiotics are given 'just in case' for simple coughs and colds,



or for diarrhoea that should be treated with oral rehydration.

Excess antibiotic use is clearly a problem everywhere, including Nepal. Calls for strict enforcement of 'prescription-only' laws may seem like one solution, but will this really serve the whole population? One of the characteristics that sets Nepal and other developing countries apart from wealthy countries is the co-existence of problems of excess and access.

In poor, remote areas of

Nepal villagers may be far from clinics and have no choice but to purchase whatever antibiotics they think they need. Clearly, self-treatment with antibiotics purchased at a shop is not the desired long-term solution. Until the healthcare system extends good access to most of the population, solutions must be tailored to reality, even if that means that some antibiotics are freely available for purchase, at least in some places.

It is not enough for experts to

“Patients are impatient”

Over-commercialisation of medical care and impoverishment spread antibiotic resistance in Nepal

SONIA AWALE

A patient suffering from sore throat enters a pharmacy in Kathmandu and asks for an antibiotic tablet so he can get better. The pharmacist says it is against the rules, but relents to make a sale. The antibiotic will not help the patient get better, instead the insufficient dosage will make his body and the bacteria that caused the illness resistant next time he gets a real infection.

A report released last month by Global Antibiotic Resistance Partnership Nepal (GARP) describes the emergence of antibiotic resistance as a 'silent epidemic' because Nepali doctors prescribe it too frequently (in many cases, randomly) and the patients too overly depend on it (asking for antibiotics even if they don't need it).

The problem in Nepal is compounded by commercialisation of the medical industry, corruption in the pharmaceutical-physician nexus, and the lack of medical care and medicines in underserved areas of the country. But even in the cities, where

there are hospitals and clinics, antibiotic abuse and misuse is common.

“Patients are just too impatient, they want a magic pill that will make them well overnight,” explains Pabitra Raj Baidya of Gyani Pharma in Patan. “They openly ask for antibiotics over the counter without a prescription.”

As the miracle drug of 20th century, antibiotics have saved millions of lives but despite warnings from very early on that it may allow bugs to mutate and adapt, it has been misused worldwide. The emergence of superbugs have caused thousands of deaths in Europe and the United States. (See adjoining articles.)

In Nepal, the GARP report points to three main factors, causing antibiotic resistance and leading to multi-drug resistant TB:

- Over prescription of drugs by doctors who get a cut on every capsule sold
- Patients who demand antibiotics but can't afford to take the full dose
- Pharmaceutical companies that try to induce physicians to over-prescribe

“As hospital treatment and prescriptions get more expensive, poorer patients can't afford the full dose anymore,” says Shailendra Shrestha of Shyam Medical Store. “Patients often come to me and say they only have money for five out of 10 capsules prescribed.”

These antibiotics then lose their efficacy even to fight common infections. In a country where nearly half the population carries the TB bacillus, antibiotic resistance is a potential time-bomb. Already, more than 1,000 patients nationwide every year are not responding to a cocktail of antibiotics commonly used in the Nepal's internationally-acclaimed DOTS anti-TB program.

Multi-drug resistant TB is now seen in 2.2 per cent of all new cases, and up to 18 per cent of relapse patients in Nepal, and many more are undetected, according to the National Tuberculosis Centre.

Even if human antibiotics are regulated, Nepal's will still get a huge dose of antibiotics from the chicken, eggs, pork, and fish they consume. The poultry and animal husbandry industries



use antibiotics preemptively to prevent infections, and these find their way into the food chain.

“Prophylactic use of antibiotics in animals is now widely accepted to be the cause of the emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria in those animals as well as in humans,” says Sameer Dixit, principle investigator at GARP Nepal.

Antibiotic resistance is not some future global crisis, it is already upon us here in Nepal. Having a long open border with India means we are also exposed to



KENJI KWOK

know the facts about antibiotic resistance, that is why one of GARP-Nepal's highest priorities is to develop curriculum and training materials for healthcare workers at all levels, both human and veterinary, in collaboration with professionals and policymakers. The first Antibiotic Awareness Week is planned in Nepal for November 2015 as part of a global campaign.

Some changes can be introduced directly by healthcare professionals and the public at

large, but others require official policy changes, including some that will not be universally popular. We applaud the Minister of Health and Population for his engagement and concern.

GARP-Nepal is one of eight GARP partners in Asia and Africa, a network built by the US and India-based think tank, the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP). GARP-Nepal is committed over the long term to helping all sectors understand antibiotic resistance in all its

facets, and to proposing solutions that will make Nepal a healthier place for all. In collaboration with government and private sectors, it also gives Nepal a voice in the ongoing global discussions and a leadership role among developing countries in confronting antibiotic resistance. 🇳🇵

Buddha Basnyat is Chair of GARP-Nepal and Hellen Gelband is Associate Director at the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy



KENJI KWOK

the spread of super-bugs in India. As people travel more, antibiotic resistance is a problem in both developed and developing countries. Nepal may be under-developed with low antibiotic usage per capita, but experts say we cannot be complacent.

Poonam Khetrapal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia warns: "We must act urgently. The world is heading for a post-antibiotic era which will be devastating in this age of emerging infectious diseases." 🇳🇵

Bugs vs drugs

The human body lives in symbiosis with microorganisms inside our body. They are called 'natural flora', and are actually good for our health. But we are also constantly being attacked by bacteria that harm us, and we pop pills to kill them. Now, the bugs have started to outsmart the drugs we use.

There was once a pre-antibiotic era where a sneeze or cough was enough to kill people. Enter antibiotics that either kill the bacteria or inhibit its growth. But misuse of this drug has allowed bacteria to develop a genetic resistance to it. Antibiotics have reached a level that no other drug can compete with it.

In Nepal, antibiotics are sold over-the-counter and the easy access leads to its misuse especially on its dosage. Later, in recurrences of the infection, the doctor has to increase the normal dosage and the drug starts to lose efficacy. Another reason is the tendency of not taking the complete dose of the medication by the patient.

It is essential to take a full course of the drug. Multidrug resistance is on the rise in Nepal. Newer traits of bacteria are discovered every day, but no new antibiotics have been developed for 20 years. The potentially revolutionary new antibiotic Teixobactin still needs to pass trials and get approval.

In the meantime, bacteria have mutated into stronger super bugs that seem invincible to the drugs used to kill them. It is important for Nepal's health sector to conserve existing antibiotics because there is no alternative to them. There has to be public awareness, prescription protocols, and controlled use by doctors.

Aakriti Ranabhat
(Ranabhat is a 4th year MBBS student in Chitwan.)

India's superbug time bomb

How India tackles the emergent threat of superbugs will affect countries in the neighbourhood, like Nepal

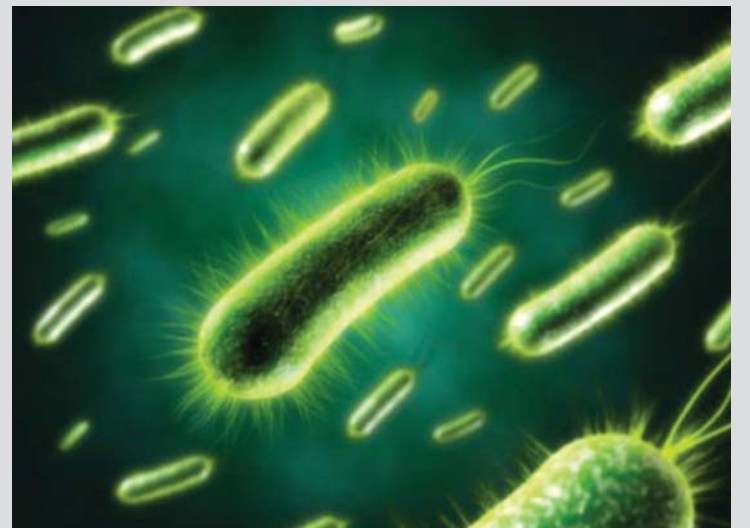
NAYAN CHANDA

India has to redouble its efforts to tackle the emergent threat of superbugs that risks turning the situation into a time bomb.

Superbugs are pathogens resistant to known antibiotics, and in recent years have caused thousands of deaths around the world. Even developed countries like the US and those in Western Europe see nearly 50,000 deaths each year from infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

In 2010, a British scientist named a superbug NDM-1 (after New Delhi where it was found) and it caused an uproar. Some even spoke of a plot to harm India's rising medical tourism. Now, a research paper published by the US National Institute of Health has named India as the likely home of superbugs. The paper warned that health care providers should be aware of the increased risk of superbug infection 'among returned travelers, especially those from India'.

Shortly thereafter, President Obama concluded that superbugs pose a serious public health risk and appointed a commission to prepare a five-year plan to confront the potential spread of the disease. The seriousness and international nature of the problem was highlighted by the fact that in addition to the relevant health authorities the commission included the state and defence departments.



In a way, those afflicted with the superbug are victims of India's success. The rise of the country's \$12.4 billion pharmaceutical industry, producer of nearly one-third of the world's antibiotics, has seen the proliferation of powerful generic drugs to every corner of India. Until recently, local chemists in any small town would hand strips of antibiotics, without a prescription, to customers complaining of common ailments like diarrhoea, fever or cough.

The indiscriminate use of such magic drugs has provoked an inevitable response: the bugs have gradually developed a resistance to antibiotics. According to Yale University's Manisha Juthani-Mehta, a specialist in infectious diseases, up to 90 per cent of Indians have drug resistant variety residing harmlessly in their intestines. The problem is that open-air defecation and poor public hygiene have allowed the superbug to contaminate the river, waterways and even drinking water. If such bacteria infects other organs or enters the blood stream it can be lethal. There have been incidences in India's private hospitals where international patients, after undergoing routine bypass surgery, have died of an infection from superbugs.

Global concern led India to set up a taskforce in 2011 to address the issue. After initially blaming unnamed foreigners for plotting to damage India's medical tourism industry the government has taken some long overdue measures. A decision earlier this year requiring chemists to insist on a doctor's prescription before selling common antibiotics should help in reducing the overuse of antibiotics. However, the efficacy of the rule will depend on its enforcement. The Modi government's cleanliness campaign and the drive to build toilets in the countryside, where millions relieve themselves in the open, is a good start. Along with measures to provide toilets, clean drinking water and build sanitation infrastructure, India needs to launch mass education campaigns about public hygiene and preventive healthcare. (YaleGlobal) 🇳🇵

Nayan Chanda is author of Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers, and Warriors Shaped Globalisation.

Falling oil price boosts economy

Roshan Adhikari and Raju Chaudhari, Kantipur, 22 January

As oil prices continue to fall in the international market, Nepal's economy is beginning to show signs of improvement. Inflation has remained stable and economic growth rate has also been positive. The drop in oil price drop could also offset loss caused by low rice and corn production this year.

"We are yet to determine how much agriculture losses will be compensated by oil prices," says Min Bahadur Shrestha, of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB).

In September, the government adopted an automatic pricing mechanism for regular revision of fuel prices. Since its introduction, petrol and diesel prices have been revised eight times. Petrol and diesel/kerosene prices dropped by 20.36 % and 19.27% respectively in the last year alone.

The oil price fall has had a positive effect



mainly in agriculture, service and industry sectors. "Apart from stabilising inflation rate, it has also increased BoP (Balance of Payment) surplus," says Shrestha.

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has been making profits ever since oil prices began to drop in the international market. But, the NOC says it will take at least three years to clear its past loans.

"Even if the loan that we took from the government is converted into capital, we will take at least three years to repay all other

loans," says NOC's executive director Chandika Bhatta. But, if oil prices begin to rise, Bhatta says the repayment period will increase dramatically.

Until the NOC clears its loan, customers will continue to pay more for all petroleum products except for LPG gas. Customers are paying Rs 14.42 more for every litre of petrol at present. With worsening power outages, Nepal has been increasing its volume of imported fuel every year. Last year, Nepal spent Rs 1.3 billion in import of petroleum products from India.

A study has shown that up to 500 MW of electricity comes from captive diesel generators which raises cost by 25%. The drop in diesel price has reduced cost of electricity generation through generators. However, there has been no effect on transportation cost.

"Money that would otherwise have been spent in fuel import can now be used in development work," says economist Keshav Acharya.

"We are fighting for the people"

BBC Nepali Service, 21 January

Rabindra Mishra's interview with UCPN (Maoist) leader Baburam Bhattarai.

Rabindra Mishra: After your vandalism and strikes, is your party fit to lead the country?
Baburam Bhattarai: The country will not change unless a party representing the poor, oppressed and marginalised communities comes to power. We need to take the responsibility for this country. For that we are ready to rectify our mistakes, correct our negative traits and move forward.

But did last night's CA fracas bring you closer to that goal or expose your weaknesses?
People have been struggling to draft their own constitution for 60 years. Last night's outburst is justified.

How can you claim to be making a constitution by and for people when all important issues about the constitution are being discussed behind closed doors?
If you disregard people's representatives who have led the revolution in the past despite their flaws, I have nothing to say. Political leaders are humans too and we have our shortcomings. But we do hold a position in the CA and it is us who have to draft a constitution. And I assure you it is being done out in the open, and not behind closed doors.

Will it be drafted by vandalising the CA?
That was an act of retribution because the party, which fought for the poor and marginalised was



sidelined. The CA has turned into the same old parliament ruled by parties represented by NC, UML and RPP.

Is it appropriate for a leader of your stature to just watch the CA being vandalised?
I request you to not put out false information. The parties in status quo, who are trying to revive the same constitution since 1990, are influencing the media a great deal. We apologise for the damage caused in the CA but we are fighting for the people.

You keep repeating the word 'people' and claim everything you did was for the oppressed, marginalised and underprivileged sector. But you torched taxis belonging to the poor.
We cannot just stand there and not do anything if the country reverts back to its former state and the same politicians have all the power. We have to fight so the country does not regress.

After what happened in the CA and on the streets, what are the chances of a constitution being written?
The rights of the oppressed minority are being violated as the country continues to degenerate. The mainstream media is more concerned with the vocal elite.

It has been so hard for you to try to help and serve the oppressed population of Nepal, hasn't it?
For years the ruling class has created a discourse and social consent through the media that it has been hard to hear the voices of the oppressed people. It is difficult but we will not stop fighting for truth and justice for the people.



"Watch! They say she will give birth on January 22."

सेतोपाटी

Rajesh KC in Setopati, 22 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"It is January 22, the party leaders now need to reassure the people we will bring a new constitution by such and such a date."

CA Chair Subhas Nembang on BBC Nepali Service, 21 January

Attacked messenger

Photojournalist Devaki Bista, himalkhabar.com, 20 January

I woke up on 20 January to news about an attack on a vehicle carrying newspapers in Siraha. I put on the fluorescent green jacket worn by photojournalists and hung my press card around my neck so I could easily be identified as a reporter. I slung my camera over my shoulder and left home on my scooter. The roads were fairly empty early morning. Riot police guarded the restricted area near the CA building. Led by UCPN (M) leader Hisila Yami, a group

हिमाल




was trying to force its way towards New Baneswor. Clad in a t-shirt with a large Nepal's flag emblazoned on it, Yami was shouting slogans. I clicked some pictures and tried to move forward, but the crowd assulted me. One of them tore up my media ID, and started hitting my scooter. I kept quiet as they verbally abused me. Two other journalists were also manhandled in front of Yami. Later I went back and identified my attacker as ex-YCL Rajan Gautam from Nuwakot and murder convict. Risk is inherent for reporters, but I felt sad for the future of my country.

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Manhandling the Chair

Some members of the elite classes deliberately fail to understand the national outrage over the legitimate outpouring of virtuous anger that manifested itself in the destruction of a measly Rs 3 million worth of furniture in the legislature-parliament in the wee-wee hours of Tuesday. Rs 3 million is peanuts compared to the Rs 3 billion meant for ex-ladakus in cantonments that went into the wallet of Comrade Maximus & Co. And it is a drop in the ocean out of the Rs 30 billion we lavished in eight years of running a Constituent Ass-embly.



It is typical of the over-reaction shown by the CA secretariat that they now want to nail down the benches so they can't be hurled through the air. This is a violation of universal norms of Westminster style parliamentary democracy. Bolting microphones down to the tables is a fundamental infringement of international treaties on freedom of expressionism of which Nepal is a signatory. We have to understand why chairs were being thrown around: because this entire exercise was not about the constitution, but about who gets to sit on the chair next. To strengthen our democracy to protect our civil and uncivil liberties, the following urgent steps need to be taken to make the Great Hall of the People a true symbol of the state of Nepal's democracy:

1. The CA is henceforth declared a hard hat area. All members are required to wear crash helmets, shoulder pads, rib protectors and groin guards at all times.
2. A fully-stocked bar will now be opened in the CA lobby so that honourable members do not have to sneak into the female toilets to muster the courage to storm the rostrum and manhandle the Chair.
3. A Personal Security Shop will be opened in the vestibule so MPs can stock up on pepper spray, stun batons, smoke grenades and self-defence knuckles for future fights. Sacks of chilli powder will also be sold.
4. The CA will henceforth also double up as a training facility for the Nepali Olympic Team to practice weight-lifting, javeline throw, shot puts, Greco-Roman wrestling, karate and tae-kwondo.
5. All marshals will be trained in the marshal arts so they can defend themselves and use CA members as punching bags.
6. A trauma centre with triage will be constructed in the CA premises to administer first aid to CA members wounded in the frontlines.
7. Sell tickets to the public in the balcony at premium rates so they can be entertained with World Wrestling Federation-approved fights. A bucket of popcorn free for all customers.
8. Provide honourable ex-guerrillas with paint ball guns so they can re-enact memorable battles from the conflict days in the floor of the house and have fun while finalising the constitution.
9. Fully inflatable dummy Chair so that if attacked the real Subhas Nembang will be safe in his chamber.
10. Install a timer with dynamite underneath the floor of the August House so that the next time it doesn't meet a deadline to promulgate a constitution it will self-destruct.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI



Good lord! Bandas are here to waste our workdays!



Arghh..I hate Bandas ...



Bandas are a such waste our time!



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