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.
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 as to prove the point that although the towns and cities across Nepal were terrorised off the streets by strikes, and the national media splashed photographs of CA members throwing chains 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 judged 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 mainstreet, but the comodres 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 the likes of Jharna Basnet, who was appointed by the NC-MLI and is expected to write the new constitution, continue to take the result seriously. And when they do, the common Nepali is hardly part of the debate.

In a country where there is no local government, and schools are the only language they have ever known: ‘pencil’ 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 does 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.

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 those compromises were withheld in reach meetings in Sunday evening, and there was optimism in the air.

Something happened that night that made the Maoist-led alliance to backtracking. And it was probably the Dahal factor. The NC-ULI then started preparing the process of voting point-by-point in the CA on the draft, when pre-designated Maoist CA members run 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 in the anti-climatic, 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 next constitution.

In a country where there is no local government, (thank Deuba for that), a greatantu, think they can get power through force, but if they expect, they begin to cry foul. For their own well-being (‘This is what 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.

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

THE ANTI-CLIMAX
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 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-Madhesi 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,” 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-BP 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-run 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 Madhesi 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 Madhesi groups.

The negotiations have therefore come down to bargaining for a power-sharing deal in the coming months. Madhesi leaders, most importantly Bijay Kumar Gachchhadar 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.”

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

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 for a constitution by home that advantage because party had more than a two-thirds majority in the last Constituent 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 endorsed by the Janajati and Madhes-based parties.

But, of course, that is too much to ask. Most prominent Maoist and Madhesi leaders lost the elections, so it is not at all surprising that they have been trying to downplay the election result and keep harping on about 'consensus'.

The claim that the Maoist-Madhesi Morcha commanded a two-thirds majority to draft the constitution last time is a cynical lie. It needs to be countered here for what it is – a lie. It needs to be countered here for what it is – a lie. It needs to be countered here for what it is – a lie.

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?

We have seen that the elections, so it is not at all surprising that they have been trying to downplay the election result and keep harping on about 'consensus'.

One alternative could be to pass the Preamble of the constitution containing the principles to which the currently warring political forces have committed – 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.

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.

THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshri

OPINION

The Deadlines

Damakant Jayshri

For more information:
Careers 9861614834
damakantj@gmail.com

You have Netflix, Hulu Plus, Spotify accounts but cannot access them in Nepal?

Mercantile Communications (P) Ltd is a leading provider of innovative and cutting edge technology products, services and business solutions. It currently has an opening for the following position:

Position: Finance Manager

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- Drive and consolidate monthly forecasting process in close cooperation with sales departments and ensure profitable results.
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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 development efforts. 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 having exceeded at least twice their income criterion (of Gross National Income per capita of less than two per cent of global GDP) to be eligible for graduation by 2020. “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 by the year 2020. “But this 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 (centre, pic top) 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)
Himalayan Passages: Tibetan and Newar Studies in Honor of Hubert Decleer (Wisdom Publications), is a fine collection of scholarly, yet accessible, articles that should be on the reading list of anyone with an interest in the history, culture and religious traditions of this region.

Hubert Decleer, to whom it pays tribute, is a Belgian native who has made Nepal home since 1980. He is a well-known figure in the Kathmandu Valley, and one of its most renowned scholars and teachers. As the founding director, then senior academic advisor, of the Tibetan Studies program at the School for International Training (SIT), he has been a beloved mentor to an entire generation of students, many of whom attribute their career choices to his benevolent influence. Several participants in his SIT programs went on themselves to become scholars in the field of Asian Studies.

Five of these experts contributed essays to this volume, including the editors: Benjamin Bogin, who teaches Asian Studies at Skidmore College, and Andrew Quintman, of Yale University’s Religious Studies department, who is a specialist in the traditions surrounding Milarepa, the Himalayan Buddhist saint. The book grew out of the papers presented by a panel of Decleer’s former students at the 2010 meeting of the International Association of Tibetan Studies. In addition to their essays, it contains contributions from senior specialists in the various branches of Himalayan studies, including such notable figures as Ernst Steinkeelner, Leonard van der Kuip, Donald Lopez, Alexander von Rospatt, Anne Vergati, and Nepal’s own Punya Prasad Panjari. They cover an impressive range of topics in their articles, including religious and social history, sacred geography, art history, textual interpretation, and ritual studies. This is especially fitting in a tribute to Decleer, as they reflect the diverse areas in which he has done pioneering research. With a biography that includes time spent as a musician, artist, linguist and textual scholar, he has an expansive range of interests.

The articles are grouped under four overarching themes: Places and Pilgrimages, Texts and Manuscripts, Ritual and Visual Traditions, and Histories and Transmissions. While each of the 14 contributions represents first-rate scholarship, it is worth drawing attention to some of the essays, including those that might be of particular interest to local readers.

In ‘Places and Pilgrimage’, an example would be Alexander von Rospatt’s piece, ‘The Mural Paintings of the Svayambhūpurāṇa at the Shrine of Śāntipur, and Their Origins with Pratāpa Malla’. Andrew Quintman’s own article deals with the biography of Milarepa and his association with sacred sites in Nepal. In the same section is Donald Lopez’s article, which looks at the encounter between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism in the form of a visit to Sri Lanka by Gendun Chopel, an interesting and somewhat controversial Tibetan figure in the first part of the 20th century.

‘Texts and Manuscripts’ includes contributions by two of Decleer’s more renowned colleagues, Leonard van der Kuip and Ernst Steinkeelner. The essay in this section that might intrigue general readers most, however, is Sarah Jacoby’s. ‘The Excellent Path of Devotion: An Annotated Translation of Sera Khandro’s Short Autobiography’ looks at the memoirs of Sera Khandro, a woman who, in the rather patriarchal world of early 20th century Tibet, became a famous writer, teacher and visionary.

In the Ritual and Visual Traditions section Swayambhu and King Pratāpa Malla get a second treatment in an article by Anne Vergati, the well-known art historian. She presents a very interesting exploration of the depiction of the famous stupa in a 17th century Newar paubha, or scroll painting, that British Resident Brian Hodgson acquired in the mid-nineteenth century, which is now housed at the Musée Guimet in Paris.

The fourth group of essays is ‘Histories and Transmissions’. The essay likely to be of most interest to a local audience is Punya Prasad Panjari’s ‘Vanaratna and His Activities in Fifteenth-Century Nepal’. Collating data from three traditional biographies of this famous Vajrayana monk and teacher from Bengal, Panjari presents a summary account of the mahāpandita’s life with, as the title indicates, a focus on his experiences in Nepal.

Though an important scholarly work, this book will make good reading for a broad audience of those interested in Buddhist traditions and the culture of the Himalaya.
The weather front sweeping in from the Afghan-Iran desert will start making its presence felt from Friday morning onwards, with more snow at higher elevations and passing showers in the midhills and Tarai. This is the winter's fourth westerly system, and quite unusual because there is usually just one such spell of rain and snow. All this bodes well for winter crops, and the snow has accumulated in the higher valleys which is good for hydroelectric generation in the coming months. The weekend will see the aftermath of this low pressure area with morning mist in Kathmandu Valley and a drop in maximum temperatures.

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**Interview with Rajesh KC**

nepalitimes.com

KATHMANDU

Text to textile

Cartoonist Rajesh Kc’s Phalano Luga is now open for business

Political cartoonist Rajesh K.C. saw the opportunity to transfer his wit from text to textile when his friends first approached him to design T-shirts three years ago.

“Cartooning is my skill and I’ve converted it into my profession, now it’s my business,” said Rajesh. KC’s brand of T-shirts ‘Phalano Luga’ is the namesake of the protagonist in his political cartoons, Phalano. Since the opening of his first store in Sundhara in July 2013, he has created over 200 different designs ranging from creative drawings of the Nepali flag to witty catchphrases and colloquialisms.

Just like his cartoons for Phalano, Rajesh draws on latest happenings in Nepali culture, society and politics to create his T-shirt designs for ‘Phalano Luga’. That is why he describes them as ‘full of Nepali flavour’.

However, unlike his political cartoons which gained popularity quickly, his clothing line has yet to gain traction beyond the market of his loyal readers that make up about 90 per cent of his clientele.

“My readers trust and like my cartoons that is why they want to wear my designs,” said Rajesh who was inspired by RK Laxman, a cartoonist for *The Times of India*.

Yet, Rajesh still has aspirations of expanding his brand ‘Phalano Luga’ in and outside of Nepal, and hopes to open stores in India, Malaysia and even Dubai.

**Cynthia Choo**

PICS: KENJI KWOK

green coloured storefront, the Pulchok branch has had better luck with customers than the outlet in Sundhara.

According to sales assistants, about 15 to 20 customers frequent the Pulchok store on busy mornings, with more streaming in after work at night. Rajesh reveals that he taught himself how to run a business before he opened his first store. He had learned the economies of scale of business when he started to mass print his shirts.

“It’s expensive to print one shirt alone, but there is a reduction in business costs when you print more shirts at one go,” he said.

The self-taught businessman may follow the rulebook on brand differentiation and cost-profit margins, but he also had a few unorthodox beliefs up his sleeves.

He said: “Although the store in Sundhara is not making profits, I give off the impression that the brand is doing well by opening more stores. Then, maybe more customers will start to take notice and buy from me.”

In addition, the entrepreneur believes that it is essential to create a uniquely Nepali brand internationally. “Phalano Luga is distinctly Nepali. Any Nepali living abroad who hears of the brand Phalano Luga will be able to tell that it is from Nepal,” quipped Rajesh.

He said: “Someday I would like Phalano Luga to be well-known like Nike or Adidas.”

*nepalitimes.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, Motihari Market RoofTop, Birgunj, 846-5000665, mos@50sheep.com.np

Garbage to Garden,
Learn to turn household wastes into compost for your garden.
At 10.30 January, 10.30am to 4pm, Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), Joraph Office, RSVP info@image-ark.com.np

Open house,
Artists Binaya Humagain, Elsa Freynee and Sabina Dangol’s joint open house exhibition.
14& 24 January, Gallery McCabe, Chabahil, Lalitpur, (01)5260110, gallerymccabe@gmail.com

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

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

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, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.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

Pulse,
A photographic exhibition by Päivi Maria Wells and the launch of collections of wearable arts designed by Naila Sattar.
10th February, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark, Kastha Tole, Lalitpur, (01)5006665, custm@image-ark.com

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

Alice Restaurant,
Steep in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental and Japanese cuisine.
Garbage to Garden,
Learn to turn household wastes into compost for your garden.
At 10.30 January, 10.30am to 4pm, Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), Joraph Office, RSVP info@image-ark.com.np

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, 10 to 6pm, Mani Samam, Narayani, (01)4415613, nepalgofzone@hotmail.com

Garbage to Garden,
Learn to turn household wastes into compost for your garden.
At 10.30 January, 10.30am to 4pm, Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), Joraph Office, RSVP info@image-ark.com.np

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, X-tas Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel, (01)4700043

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

La Casita de Boudhanath,
Enjoy a host of Mediterannaini cuisine with a breathtaking view of the Boudhanath Stupa.
Boudhanath, 981-3614384

Magic Beans,
Coffee, cakes, and sandwiches with magical touch and taste.
Shepew Mall, Durbar Marg, (01)4289194

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

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

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10th February, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark, Kastha Tole, Lalitpur, (01)5006665, custm@image-ark.com

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

Magazine, St. Geralds Mill, (01)4263070.
MUSIC

23 - 29 JANUARY 2015

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 sites.

GETAWAYS

Park Village Resort,
Far away from the madding crowd, yet so close to the city.
Aishworiyam, (01)4757200, pk@pklok.com.np

Shivapuri Village,
Eco tourism close to the Shivapuri National Park replete with a charm of bygone days.
Pokhara, Shivapuri National Park,
(01)4017725, 985-1046641, info@shivapuri.com

Mum’s Garden Resort,
Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages surrounded by lush green gardens with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range.
Lake Side, Pokhara, (08)1464688.

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

The first eco-jungle of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, with a spa, boutique, guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, and including suites with a private swimming pool.
Andrali, West Chitwan, (01)4009620, lj@barahi.com

MUIC

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)4024026.

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

Rs 100, 24 January (Chitwan), 31 January (Kathmandu) and 7 February (Pokhara), (01)5010773, info@wavemag.com.np

Barahi Jungle House,
The first eco-jungle of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, with a spa, boutique, guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, and including suites with a private swimming pool.
Andrali, West Chitwan, (01)4009620, lj@barahi.com

Grand Norling Hotel,
Countrywide weekend package offering suite room, swimming, gym, massage, and discounts on other facilities.
Gokarna, (01)4910193

Mulchowk,
Select from set Ala-carte menu or regular menu while enjoying classical fusion, folk music and instrument music by Mui band.
Babar Motel, Restaurent, (01)4029801

Mulchowk,
Get 10% off on a la carte menu or regular menu while enjoying classical fusion, folk music and instrument music by Mui band.
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Babar Motel, Restaurent, (01)4029801
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 8,611 m, 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 top-notch climber and guide

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?

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.

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

DEEPAK ADHIKARI

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

THE HEIGHT OF SACRIFICE

“Another big accident is a matter of time”
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 national news agencies based in Kathmandu.

It was no different when Sherpas and European mountaineers 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 Bhoti and Pasang Bhoti, two Sherpas from Rolwaling 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.

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 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 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?

Our is a country where hard work is neither respected nor rewarded. We have a tendency to devalue and under-appraise 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 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 Samouraï* (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.
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 Solitudo – 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 colours 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 reminded 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 awaken 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 reminded us that the capital also has its moments of peace. The vivid colours show how overwhelming Nepal can be.

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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.

**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.

What should you do if 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 humankindly 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.

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**GIZMO by YANTRICK**

The iMac with Retina 5K runs on Apple’s OS X Yosemite, and is powered by a 3.5GHz quad-core Intel Core i7 (can be upgraded to Intel Core i7 for about USD 250) with 8GB of DDR5 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 3TB 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, the Mac with Retina 5K does not come cheap and is priced at approx. Rs 300,000. But, for maintaining high standard, producing sharp image quality and huge storage space, it is worth the money.
The debate about free speech and tolerance in France is relevant to the current discussion about secularism in Nepal.

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 the apologie du terrorisme (‘defending terrorism’). He had posted on Facebook a screenshot of a cartoon 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 was already widely available on the social media and was published on 7 January on the website of the controversial French comedian Bremond.

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 offence, 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 in securing the rights of 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 writing, 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 demeaning Islam and Muslims is venerated as courageous free speech, while anything mocking those who engage in such demomination – even using precisely the same techniques – can get you locked up’.

This week, rapper Saidou of the band Z.E.P. and sociologist Said 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 colonial past, its paternalist smells, stenches, and reflexes. Fuck France and its imperial history, its capitalist walls, furtiveness and delusions’. Z.E.P., ironically, stands for ‘Zone d’expression populaire’ – ‘Popular Expression Zone’. But irony is now apparently dangerous for the credibility of the justice system. It said that these summary convictions vindicated its warnings.

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Globally 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 sirens for all countries to address the problem. A report from Public Health England predicts that by 2050 antimicrobial resistance will cost the UK £1.2 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 review paper assessing antibiotic resistance and the factors associated with it. 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 antibiotic effectiveness may allow bugs to mutate and adapt, it has been shown frequently (in many cases, randomly) and because Nepali doctors prescribe it too often. Patients who demand antibiotics but get better, instead of the insufficient dosage 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 for a Global Action Plan for antibiotic resistance. Vaccines or other preventive measures are broadly, anything that reduces antibiotic effectiveness. 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 utilise the information they need to make the change. The antibiotic resistance is evolution in action, a natural process that occurs in response to all antibiotic use. If use is reduced, however, it has been shown in some European countries, effectiveness can be regained. This may mean that the current antibiotic pipeline can be managed intelligently to maintain effective antibiotic coverage for decades. The actions of ranges 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 antibiotic effectiveness. Vaccines or other preventive measures are

The growth of an unwelcome guest in Nepal

BUDDHA BASNYAT
and HELLEN GELBAND

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

“Patients are impatient”

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

SONIA AWAKE

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

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

As hospital treatment and prescriptions get more expensive, many 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 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. “Propylactic 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 Samesi 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...
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. So unexpectedly did even the threat 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 $1.2 trillion 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 digestive system. The bugs have then been flushed down the drain into rivers and waterways, polluting the whole ecosystem.

At the same time, open-air defecation is a mass practice in the countryside, where millions relieve themselves in the open; in urban India, there have been reports of local chemists giving 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 digestive system. The bugs have then been flushed down the drain into rivers and waterways, polluting the whole ecosystem.

At the same time, open-air defecation is a mass practice in the countryside, where millions relieve themselves in the open; in urban India, there have been reports of local chemists giving drugs to every corner of India. Recently, the Centre has taken some long overdue measures. A decision earlier this year requiring chemists to insist on a doctor’s prescription to sell 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. And 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.

Nayan Chanda is author of Bound Together: How Traders, Producers, Adventurers, and Warriors Shaped Globalisation.
Falling oil price boosts economy

Roohan Khati and Raju Chaudhari, Kathmandu, 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 losses 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 Man 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 prices have 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 BOF (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 drastically.

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 100 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 Aharya.

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 by 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 not to print out false information. The parties in status quo, who are trying to revive the same constitution since 1998, are influencing the media as a great deal. We apologize 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 while 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 new 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.

Attacked messenger

Photojournalist Devaki Bista, AmritaEditor.com, 20 January

I woke up on 20 January to news about an attack on a vehicle carrying newspapermen in Sishu. 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 turned my camera over my shoulder and left home on my scooter. The roads were fairly empty early morning. Rast police guarded the restricted area near the CA building. Led by UCPN (M) leader Hilda Kami, a group was trying to force its way towards New Baneshwor. Clad in a shirt with a large Nepal’s flag embroidered on it, Kami was shouting slogans. I lacked some pictures and tried to move forward, but the crowd assailed me. One of them tore up my media ID, and started hitting my scooter. I kept quiet as they manhandled in front of Kami. 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 C-classes deliberately fail to understand the national outrage over the legitimate outpouring of virtuous anger that manifested itself in the destruction of a nearly 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 Assembly.

Why are we worried about the furniture anyway, it was gifted by the People’s Republic and can easily be replaced with another bilateral grant. After all, no price is too high to defend the right of Nepalis to cut our country into little pieces so we can remain poor. Parliamentary decorum is only for the hoity-toity comprador-bourgeoisie running dog of imperialism belonging to the monopoly capitalist class enemies among the neo-reactionary blood-sucking landlords, anyway.

When anarchists were behaving like arses torching taxis and motorcycles on the streets outside, how can you expect their colleagues in the assembly to turn the other cheek? After all, it is too much to ask an honourable member of the CA to maintain parliamentary decorum after he had made several trips to the female toilet to partake of swigs from hip flasks. How can we expect members of the opposition to sit idly by while the parties with a majority in the August House try to go for a vote? Is that the democracy we fought to restore and protect?

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 hencethrough 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 knuckled 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 weightlifting, javelin 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.