No, the sky did not fall on 22 January. But the blame game went into high gear as top leaders tried to deflect public anger over the delayed constitution at their rivals. Both sides know that they have no other option but to negotiate. After destroying parliamentary furniture as a pressure tactic, the opposition Maoist-Madhesi alliance has decided not to boycott the CA and its delayed-action street stir is half-hearted. The ruling coalition led by the UML’s KP Oli is pressing for a vote not necessarily because they want to carry through with it, but as a deterrent to force a consensus. The coming week will tell if all this brinkmanship will finally yield a constitution.
No, the sky did not fall on 22 January. But, as the smoke cleared, the blame game this week went into high gear as top leaders tried to deflect public anger at their opponents.

But the game was accepted by even the more hardline opposition leaders that from a technical standpoint the constitution is ready to go. Of the four points of disagreement on the judiciar, electoral, formula, food of governance and federalism, there is some gap remaining only in the decimation of the five Tarai districts in eastern and western Nepal. But even here, ideas for reconciliation have been put forward: declare them union territories, adjust district borders, or leave this issue to be sorted out later.

Rajendra Mahato, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai, it is now clear, are putting a spanner in the works for whatever reason. Narayan Kaji Shrestha of the Maoists, and Bijaya Gachhadar of the MDF-D have tried to play mediatory roles, but have been sidelined and ridiculed by their own parties for their troubles.

Something good came out of the vandalism on the floor of the CA on the night of 22 January – it was a vivid demonstration to Nepalis watching it all unfold on tv of the kind ofarchy we are up against. It was also a demonstration of the desperation of the opposition alliance and proof of how much they have been weakened. The Maoists, especially Bhattarai, have blundered of how much they have been weakened. The fairness of the opposition alliance and proof up against. It was also a demonstration of the desperation of the opposition alliance and proof of how much they have been weakened. The Maoists, especially Bhattarai, have blundered.

Maoists, and Bijaya Gachhadar of the MDF-D have tried to work mediatory roles, but have been sidelined and ridiculed by their own parties for their troubles. Narayan Kaji Shrestha of the Maoists, and Bijaya Gachhadar of the MDF-D have tried to play mediatory roles, but have been sidelined and ridiculed by their own parties for their troubles.

A new constitution still looks iffy, but in Nepal the unexpected is also to be expected.

Nepali Muslims are not as marginalised as their own community thinks these are. They have been totally different. The true leaders have their own interests in the post-constitution government.

Constitution
The blame for the failure of CA1 and CA2 should be shared equally by Nepali leaders and foreign powers who supported the Maoist terrorists to run the country in the first place (The Anti-Climax, Editorial, #472). How many more years do we have to wait to see a constitution?

Nita Sharma
Nepals should try looking at themselves in the mirror first. Every time a monkey shouts ‘handy’ they cower at home and won’t come out. It is you who have allowed these monkeys to rule. Stop beating about what you have brought upon yourself and do something.

Simon
A band is terrorism, pure and simple. It is enforced by fear and terror. Yet, the international community thinks these areas are progressive forces fighting for inclusion and equality. Wake up and smell the coffee. Of course, the central parties are not saints, but they are harmless boy scouts compared to the Maoists.

Jay
When these criminals speak of consensus, what they mean is that everyone will agree with what you view or else they will obstruct, destruct and destroy until you do.

Socrates
The Maoists have the support of more than 420 lawmakers in the first CA (Pass the preamble), Damakajaya, #472). And that was the only reason speaker Subhas Nembang did not bother to call the assembly to initiate the voting process because he knew that a good number of lawmakers from NC and UML were going to vote against their parties’ stance. The speaker was influenced by the partisan interest. Now, the situation has reverted. The ruling parties have the required number but cannot draft a constitution as the opposition is playing the same card. To only blame the opposition parties for failure is solely a partisan view of the writer.

Nepali Mann
All current leaders have failed us miserably (Better late than never), Om Astha Rai, #472). They have betrayed our trust. They have used and abused us. These leaders are only focused on their personal ambitions. If they cared about Nepal or the Nepali people, we would have had a constitution by now.

Geeta Rai
One of the most significant cuts in the proposed 7th Five Year Plan is the reduction in the number of the non-detectable disease encephalitis. The country has seen a sharp decrease in the incidence of the disease in recent years. However, the proposed budget for the disease control programme is only a fraction of the actual requirement.

Guy Khemka
In the past, the government has failed to provide adequate funding for the disease control programme, resulting in a decrease in the number of cases. The proposed budget is not sufficient to fund the programme properly.

David Seddon doesn’t seem to know what he is talking about. There are troops protecting mosques in France as well. So your assumption that only synagogues are protected is false. French secularism applies to everyone living in France and not just to Muslims. But it is Muslims who try to drag their religion into the state. They demand that the canteens in public schools provide halal meat, they demand separate hours for women in public swimming pools. Radical Muslims demand that their wives be checked only by female doctors. And when they are reminded of separation of state and religion, in other words, of secularism in French society, they feel targeted.

Hurray
What is needed now is a credible mediator acceptable to all sides. It could be Nembang, but the Maoists have demeaned him. The president could step in, but he also seems coy enough staying on in Shital Nibas. The Europeans have squandered their influence by unnecessarily antagonising the government.

Surprisingly, two former prime ministers waiting in the wings have by default become possible negotiators: the NC’s Sher Bahadur Deuba and the UML’s Madhav Kumar Nepal. They appear more accommodative to the opposition and are capable of bringing the Maoists back to talk. A new constitution still looks iffy, but in Nepal the unexpected is also to be expected.

SOLUTIONS FROM WITHIN

Antibiotic resistance
Excellent summary of the looming threat of multi-drug resistant TB among Nepals (Patients are impatient), Sonal Awale, #472). We are starting at a health crisis of immense proportions that will potentially take us back to the pre-antibiotic era where you can die from an ordinary infection. The government needs to immediately act to preserve the efficacy of existing antibiotics, especially the ones used in the anti-TB DOTs program, for the private medical sector to self-regulate. Short term greed among doctors and pharmacists will end up killing a lot of people, including them.

Dr Joshi
Each strip needs to have a pin code which must be SMS’ed back to a central repository matching it with a doctor’s prescription. There will be a cost overhead (5%), but it is sure a simple dispensing mechanism in which there is a consequence can be worked out.

Nam
CA chair
When the monkeys in parliament were busy turning the house into a circus, we saw Nembang sitting there in his dignified manner. He is truly impeccable (#Maoist target Nembang), Special, www.nepalitimes.com. If the USC(M) had only five per cent of what Subhas Nembang is made of, the party would have been totally different.

Sushma Karki
Nembang: The one, and only true patriot in this nation. Salute to you, sir. You truly are carrying on the traditions of the great leader, Bir Pratap Shah, whose principle was ‘May your tribe increase, and may other craven leaders learn from you.

The CA Chair needs to bring these clowns under control and give 30 million Nepals the constitution they deserve.

Kama!

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most powerful man in the world – indicating India’s rise to the global pond, he said from his backyard watched with envy.

The Indian constitution took 165 days of intense debate spread over 11 grueling sessions in the Constituent Assembly (parliament, out of which 114 were devoted to discussion on the draft constitution). Today, 65 years later, the Indian Constitution contains 448 articles in 25 parts, 12 schedules and 5 appendices with 98 amendments made so far.

Despite huge differences in size, economy and political history, Nepal can learn some lessons (and pitfalls) from the Indian constitutional exercise. And, as a matter of fact, Nepal (they deliberately didn’t want to call it ‘federation’) has been grappling with its own share of constitutional fault lines. In its final session before the promulgation, the chief architect of the Indian constitution BR Ambedkar had warned: “On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of ‘one man one vote and one vote one value’. In our social and economic life, we will be basing our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of ‘one man one value’. If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.”

Over the years, these fissures widened as the Indian union faced identity movements in its southern states demanding linguistic rights, while nationalism in insurgency-ridden Telengana, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland dragged New Delhi to war against a quartet of people’s groups. Ambekar saw it coming. In his view, without social democracy at its base political democracy has little chance of succeeding. If anything, the custodians of the Indian constitution seem to have ignored the words of this Dalit intellectual who had no illusions about the limitations of the document he had penned. Making a scathing critique of patriotic nationalism, Ambekar had warned: “I am of opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realise that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us. For then only we shall realise the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realizing the goal.”

The Indian experience and Ambekar’s words hold valuable lessons for Nepal’s Constituent Assembly which is also grappling with federalism, nationalism and minority rights. For the last seven years, the political parties have been at loggerheads over these issues, making their own petty electoral calculations, ignoring the fact that they are only political stakeholders to the process and not the ultimate beneficiaries. Their narrow partisan and personal interests have overridden the interest of Nepal’s diverse population and its divergent aspirations. After consensus among parties became impossible, CA Chair Nembang took a controversial decision earlier this week by forming a Proposal Drafting Committee amid opposition protests, allowing it ten days to prepare a questionnaire on disputed issues. This signals the initiation of the ‘process’ that is supposed to kick-start the stalled constitution drafting.

To its credit, the UCPN(M)-led opposition alliance has taken the CA and has kept the doors open for talks. They claim the NC and UML aren’t showing the same commitment to consensus that they did when they were in the ruling majority. But they must also understand that the constitution is a work in progress, and the logical step is always back to the people for a new mandate in the next elections. The ruling coalition, on the other hand, must know that a constitution is only as good as it serves the people who grant it legitimacy. In the final years of his life, Ambedkar was thoroughly disillusioned with the document he had so passionately drafted over ten years, despite constitutional safeguards including the reservation policy, there was no qualitative change in the lives of Indian Dalits because the existing socio-political structure severely impeded their capacity to access those safeguards.

In this sense he speaks: “My friends tell me that I drafted the constitution, but I am asking you to be prepared with lots of issues that lasts a lifetime. I will be the first person to burn it”. Nevertheless, his lifelong belief in the potential of this project holds a valuable lesson for the constitution drafters when they sit to finalise the statute in the coming days.

#743

## Lessons from Belgium

Cynthia Choo

Political power games need to take a back seat when debating the constitution. The Constitution of Belgium was entered into a process needed in a process for constitutional change,” said Leterme, who was in Kathmandu this week as the new head of the Stockholm-based International IDEA. He also visited Burma after being unable to pass constitutional amendments.

Lessons from Belgium

A former Belgian Prime Minister gives his take on Nepal’s constitution writing process.

By the Way

Anurag Acharya

The Indian experience with constitution drafting post-independence holds valuable lessons for Nepal’s constitution writing process.

The statue of liberty

The Indian experience with constitution drafting post-independence holds valuable lessons for Nepal

**For Nepal to put on the table various solutions, remedies and legislation to ensure an inclusive and democratic constitution.**

Leterme said it was his firm belief in people power that has helped him make a smooth transition from being a politician to an international advocate of democracy. He wants Nepal to focus on ensuring better overall governance through democracy. “It is crucial to set in place programs that allow people to demand accountability and empower them to keep checks on the power structure. Democracy is not only about elections, the quality of democracy is also important.”
Saving Nepal Airlines

Twenty-five years of decline has left Nepal Airlines a shadow of its former self, but the country's national carrier is now poised for growth with fleet and route expansion drivers. The ailing airline, however, needs to streamline its management before adding new planes, aviation sources say.

The trajectory of an airline that used to be considered one of the best in South Asia correlates closely with the country’s recent history. The slide began soon after the restoration of democracy in 1990 as politicians interfered with management for kickbacks and patronage. But it was after 2008, after the 'Royal' was dropped from its name when Nepal became a republic, that things went from bad to worse. An airline that once proudly flew the Nepali flag to destinations from Kathmandu to Kansai was serving only a handful of destinations.

In 1990 Nepal Airlines had four medium-haul jets flying to 12 international destinations and seven turboprops servicing 20 domestic airports. Today there are only two 30-year-old Boeing 757s, and two airworthy Twin Otters left. The airline doesn't fly to any point in India anymore, and connects only five airports within the country.

The airline is now preparing to add the first of its two new generation Airbus A320s next month and expand its domestic fleet with six Chinese aircrafts. “But the airline’s management style is out of sync with what is needed to run a modern airline company,” said an aviation consultant who has advised Nepal Airlines in the past. “How can you run an airline like you manage the Food Corporation?!”

Airline insiders say politicians, bureaucrats and senior airline management seem to be abnormally eager to sell off the airline’s two Boeing 757s. They fear it will be a repeat of the shady deal by the then Nepali Congress government to dispose of two 727s at below market prices in 1991 amidst widespread allegations of kickbacks.

The airline is also facing a crippling shortage of pilots. At present it has only 25 pilots for its 757s, and five of them are retiring. Six pilots have gone for simulator training for Airbus A320 in Bangalore, and six more will be leaving next month. When they return, rules won’t allow them to fly 757s.

Three of the pilots returned this week after finding the conversion to A320 “too difficult,” airline sources confirmed. The A320 cockpit is much more computerised and its control systems are radically different from the 757s, but there are reports the pilots were sent to France without adequate preparation.

“The will be no one-to-one ‘international routes by next month,” one senior 757 captain warned, on condition of anonymity.

The first Airbus A320 is expected to resume the airline’s Kathmandu-Delhi route which at the moment is operated by five Indian and one Bhutanese airline. One reason for the shortage is the exodus of 757 pilots in the last decade. A senior captain at Nepal Airlines earns only $1,500 a month, whereas a pilot with as many flying hours in an international airline has an average monthly salary of $16,000.

The airline management and officials are using the lack of pilots as an excuse to rush the sale of the 757, even though many ex-Nepal Airlines pilots would gladly return to Nepal if offered $6,000 a month.

Immediate four steps Nepal Airlines needs to take to become viable:

1. Implement a Public-Private Partnership and divest ownership from government.
2. Bring in an international management consultant.
3. Move headquarters, use present premises for revenue.
4. Urgently resolve shortage of pilots.

Twin Otter captains can also be sent to China immediately for conversion training so the 757s can keep flying.

The 757s are of the ‘comb’ variety with a forward cargo hatch and have a resale value of at least $18 million each, airline sources say. They are fully depreciated and the company could still use them for budget routes or cargo.

The airline has been hamstrung with a deal pushed by politicians for six Chinese aircraft for domestic operations. The first MA-60 turboprop has barely flown 40 hours in the past six months on trunk routes, and has become such a drain on the airline’s coffers that this week management wrote to the government, saying it didn’t want the remaining four planes.

But by far the biggest problem is that Nepal Airlines is run like a third-rate government corporation, experts say, and doesn’t have the management expertise and transparent decision-making needed to operate an international airline.

TAKEOFF CHECKLIST

2. Bring in an international management consultant.
3. Move headquarters, use present premises for revenue.
4. Urgently resolve shortage of pilots.

NEW JET: The Airbus A320 of Nepal Airlines (N9-AW Sagarmatha) with shock absorbers, the first of two that will augment the fleet this year. The plane will arrive in Kathmandu on 1 February and will start flying the daily New Delhi route.

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**New Jet:** The Airbus A320 of Nepal Airlines (N9-AW Sagarmatha) with shock absorbers, the first of two that will augment the fleet this year. The plane will arrive in Kathmandu on 1 February and will start flying the daily New Delhi route.
INTERESTING TIMES

Mallika Aryal

SURKHET -- Srijana BK, 23, emerges from inside an orange-coloured tent carrying a three-year-old son to prepare supper for the family.

She is eight months into her second pregnancy which she has spent in a cold tent crammed with a bed and other essentials she has managed to salvage from the flood that devastated western Nepal last August. The pungent blue smoke from the stove fills the inside of the tent, and her son coughs as he wipes off tears from reddened eyes.

At least 96 people were killed and tens of thousands displaced in Surkhet, Dang, Bardiya and Banke districts in the August floods. More than 500 mm of rain fell overnight on 14 August 2014, and rivers burst their banks with little warning.

Nearly 200 families have been sheltering in Girighat camp since floods washed away their homes that night. The camp is set in an open space by the Karnali Highway and close to a community forest.

Floodwaters rose dramatically and the BK family didn’t have time to gather their belongings as the water washed their homes away. “We had a two storey house, now we have nothing,” says Srijana.

Her husband, Jay BK, grabbed his pregnant wife, his 70-year-old mother and their young son and ran to higher ground in the dark. They spent the whole night in the jungle in pouring rain, racing with the rising waters.

Although the camp is right next to the highway and close to town, the neglect is visible. The displaced have been living there for the last five months and say that the government has been largely absent.

“They can’t go to school, they’re susceptible to health problems, infections, violence,” says Manoj Basnet, child protection officer with Save the Children, Nepal.

Although there is a sense of helplessness amongst the displaced families, the children of Girighat camp spend their time at the temporary learning center, some ten minutes walk from their camp which is supported by Save the Children.

“arly only to ensure a normal life for children is to see to it that there is minimal disruption from their regular routine, and these centres attempt to provide that,” says Basnet.

Children like Srijana’s three-year-old are safe in the learning centre for now, but the BK family’s troubles are far from over. Jay, who used to work in India cannot go back there and leave his displaced family alone with no money or support.

“We can’t depend on handouts forever, how long can they support us, how long can they keep running these temporary schools?” asks Jay.

It’s not that there has been no relief, but the government’s disaster relief mechanism is only activated during the monsoon to deal with the immediate aftermath. The focus now should be on long-term rehabilitation, to organise resettlement so they can get their lives in order again.

The government needs to move away from thinking that response only means rescue and relief. As natural disasters become the norm, disaster management should be a 12-month process.

The BK family, and most of those who were displaced can’t plan for the future because they have lost their farms.

Dilisara Bhandari, Jay BK’s neighbor in the camp, sums up her disappointment: “It hurts us that the government has no plan for us, that they have forgotten that we have lost everything, that our children can’t have the same hopes and dreams and that we shiver every night in these tents.”

@mikaness

Five months later, the survivors of west Nepal’s monsoon floods wait out the winter for government relief
The whole country is experiencing a cold snap and this unseasonal interlude will continue in Kathmandu into the weekend. Clear nights and northerly wind direction is bringing cold dry air from the Tibetan plateau. The temperature is in the minus teens in the trekking trails for anyone up there this season. Kathmandu’s collarways will see frost. But the temperature will climb only to 18 during the daytime due to some cloud cover, with a brisk breeze in the afternoon pushing the pollution away.

Watch Narendra Dangol’s interview nepalitimes.com

THE ROOT MAN

Little-known artist turns root cleaning hobby into artistic passion

Forty-four year old Narendra Dangol (pic) started collecting gnarled roots of holy trees just so his mother would stop calling him lazy. Narendra, who is unemployed, stumbled upon this hobby when he found some discarded roots by the roadside.

“I decided to clean it up and put it at home. To my surprise, after dusting the mud off [the root], it was beautiful,” he said.

When cleaned and propped upright, the snaking roots resemble artistic installations, and it is easy to let your imagination run wild amidst Narendra’s roots.

These rare and delicate roots require ample patience to handle and clean. A metre long root can take between two hours to three days to clean. The biggest root in his collection took Narendra half a year.

“These installations can be anything to anyone, I don’t want to restrict anyone’s imagination of what it should be,” said Narendra.

When beginning his collection six years ago, the collector’s roots now occupy four rooms in his house.

In January this year, Narendra was asked to exhibit his work at the courtyard of Patan Museum by the Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Museum. The exhibition (pic, above), free for visitors inside the museum, ironically cost Narendra Rs 5000 instead, as he had to rent a vehicle to transport the roots to the museum.

For Dangol, whose only source of income is rent money from tenants, this has been an expensive hobby. Besides not getting any financial return from his art, Narendra also had to sacrifice extra income by using empty rooms for storage rather than subletting to tenants.

The lack of sponsors willing to invest in art - and artists - in Nepal makes it even more financially taxing. So, why continue?

In addition to the aesthetic beauty of the root collection, Narendra says he feels the need to preserve roots of the Jyapuswan tree.

“It used to be treated as a holy plant in Nepal, people don’t understand its importance anymore. Now, they just treat them as waste and throw them out,” he said.

His determination to spread awareness about the Jyapuswan roots further spurred his passion for the unique art of root sculpting. Unfortunately, this passion might be short-lived.

This makes Narendra even more passionate about protecting the rare trees that give him the roots of his art. Without the roots, Narendra knows there will be no art or hobby for him to continue. This is perhaps why the humble Nepali doesn’t go by the title of a sculptor, or an artist.

He said: “I don’t wish to have a status or a title. I am just happy admiring the complexity of the intertwined roots after I clean them.”

PICS: KENJI KWOK

CYNTHIA CHOO
Nippon cinema, A two-day Japanese film festival organised by the Embassy of Japan in association with Japanese Language Teachers’ Association of Nepal. 30 January and 31 January, Pokhara, (01)4426680, cultural-emb@km.mofa.go.jp

CAN 2015, The 15th edition of Computer Association of Nepal (CAN)’s annual IT show promises to be bigger and better than ever. Till 2 February, Bhrikuti Mandap, Exhibition Road, (01)5532586, sunil@ebizlinks.com.np

Street fest, Residents and revellers come together to celebrate Losar on the streets of Boudha. Boudha, 31 January, 10.45am onwards, 981-3836319

Pedal power, A cycle rally to mark World Cancer Day organised by Nepal Cancer Relief Society. 31 January, 8am, Patan Durbar Square, for registrations www.eventbrite.com

Indo-Nepal, Inauguration of a joint exhibition by Nepali artists from Banaras Hindu University. 3-February, 5.30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babor Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070, sthapta@mos.com.np

Rugby in Nepal, The first-ever National Rugby 7s Championship is here. Organised by the Nepal Rugby Association, the competition will feature five teams from all across the country. Selected teams will represent Nepal in international competitions. 31 January, 9am, Dhanushthi Kangarailo Stadium, Tripureshwor, 9851207177

Art market, A place to sell and buy paintings, prints, posters and design products. 7 February, 12 to 3pm, the yellow house, Sanepa, (01)5006665, contact@image-ark.com

Pulse, A photographic exhibition by Paisi Maria Wells and the launch of collection of wearable arts designed by Naile Satar, featuring Paisi Wells’ images. 10-18 February, 10am to 6pm, Image Ark, Lalitpur, Lalitpur, (01)5006665, contact@image-ark.com

Galli Run, A race through the historical alleys and world heritage sites. 31 January, 7.30am, Patan Durbar Square, gallirun.com

Ma Nepali, Nine Nepali personalities including actor Rajesh Hamal and slam poets Ujwala Maharjan and Yukta Bajracharya share their life stories. Rs 150, 4 February, 1.30 to 3pm, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamalpuri, 9842248333

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

Downtown, Go Italian at this restaurant, we suggest biryani. Pushewali Road, Patan, (01)3107757

Manny’s, Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunch Potatoes and don’t forget their signature Manny’s Spicy Wings. All served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Jawalakhel, (01)553919

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Fire&Ice, For the best Italian in town. Thamel, (01)4250210

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, Ktoo Beer and Steakhouse, Thamel, (01)4700043.
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Friday Fuse,
Fusion band Kota dub dub will be playing live.
Rs 250, 30 January, House of Music, Thamel, 985-1075172

Underground
Local metal bands get together to celebrate Underground Nepal’s fifth anniversary.
Rs 100 (door sale), Rs 250 (gen-sale).
7 February, Purple Haze, Thamel, 985-1065764, music@pokharaground.com

Yoga weekend,
Calm the mind and filter your thought processes in a yoga retreat with instructor Sati at the scenic Namo Buddha resort.
Rs 13,500, 31 January to 1 February, Namo Buddha, 980-2045484, info@pranamaya-yoga.com

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Friday Fuse,
Fusion band Kota dub dub will be playing live.
Rs 250, 30 January, House of Music, Thamel, 985-1075172

Underground
Local metal bands get together to celebrate Underground Nepal’s fifth anniversary.
Rs 100 (door sale), Rs 250 (gen-sale).
7 February, Purple Haze, Thamel, 985-1065764, music@pokharaground.com

Yoga weekend,
Calm the mind and filter your thought processes in a yoga retreat with instructor Sati at the scenic Namo Buddha resort.
Rs 13,500, 31 January to 1 February, Namo Buddha, 980-2045484, info@pranamaya-yoga.com

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CARVING HIS NICHE

A fourth generation sculptor continues his family occupation

STÉPHANE HUËT
Jaya Raj Bajracharya grew up in a family of stone carvers. As a child, Jaya Raj often woke up to the sound of his father and grandfather chipping away at a stone sculpture in their workshop. When he turned 15, he was handed his first chisel and mallet.

After six years of apprenticeship, Jaya Raj was allowed to join the family business. Today, he is passing on the traditional occupation to his 11-year-old daughter. “From my great grandfather to my daughter, the art of stone carving has been in the family for five generations now,” says the 38-year-old.

On the wall of his showroom at Babar Mahal Restored are pictures, one of his late grandfather, Buddha Ratna Bajracharya, receiving the Indra Rajya Laxmi Award from King Birendra in 1973. Buddha Ratna had made many stone sculptures for the Royal Palace. Statues carved by the Bajracharya family can be seen in hotels and monasteries all over the country. Jaya Raj is most proud of a 10m Guru Rinpoche he carved for a monastery in Manang. When he returned from the Foire de Paris in France in 2001, he made two identical sculptures of a woman holding a jar, which reminds him of Ingres’ "The Spring." "While visiting The Musée du Louvre, I was amazed by the marble sculptures," he says. "So when I came back home, I reproduced them in Nepali stones."

The two statues of the women have a distinct Hellenistic look as the two statues of the women have a distinct Hellenistic look as the two statues of the women have a distinct Hellenistic look as they guard the entrance to Jaya Raj’s showroom. "Many clients are interested in the statues but they are not for sale," he says.

The same curiosity led Jaya Raj to experiment with new tools. During his visit to Vermont in the USA, a state famous for skilled stonecutters, he learned how to use the air chisel. "It’s convenient for sculpting rough outlines, but I still use traditional Nepali tools for making modern sculptures," he says.

His current project is a concept for a 10m Guru Rinpoche stone figure for Namring in the Manaslu region. "After I finish the sketch, I’ll have to carve the stone at the site," says Jaya Raj, who usually works in his studio in Gwarko in Patan.

Jaya Raj’s stone sculptures have also found places outside Nepal. He has recently finished working on a life-size replica of the sumptuous royal bath of the Sundari Chok in Patan Darbar Square. The whole piece is now ready to be shipped to Germany for assembly. About two-third of his clients are foreigners, mostly from the USA, Germany and Japan. Bajracharya started striking out to the international market after exhibiting in the 23rd Osaka International Trade Fair in 1997. The exposure encouraged him to learn new techniques and forms, and Jaya Raj now also makes modern sculptures.

ROCK FORMATION: (Clockwise, from left) A worker from Jaya Raj Bajracharya’s stone carving studio in Gwarko working on Buddha statue and Jaya Raj Bajracharya’s store carving studio in Gwarko working on a Buddha sculpture.

Inspired by international exhibitions that he has been invited to, Jaya Raj’s collection now also includes modern sculptures amidst his traditional religious ones.

The stone carving showroom at Babar Mahal Restored showcases Jaya Raj’s work. Jaya Raj with a 8-foot Guru Rinpoche he took three years to sculpt.

When Alain Bordier, founder of Alain Bordier Foundation wanted to build a Nepali-style Lichchhavi chaitya within the premises of the Tibet Museum in Gruyères in Switzerland, he contacted Nepali art connoisseur, Ulrich von Schroeder. Bordier couldn’t afford to build an elaborate stupa, and an exact replica would invite unnecessary legal hassles, so Schroeder suggested getting a Nepali artist to improvise a new Purna Chaitya in Kathmandu and take it to Switzerland.

Architect Rajan Shrestha from Bhaktapur integrated the designs of the hemispherical dome of a chaitya outside Kuthubaha and Chahal for the base of Kinnari Statue. Enshrined with precious gems, the sculpture’s base was to be carved with Nepali and Newari inscriptions.

With the design part complete, they went around Patan looking for a sculptor. They finally met Santalal Dayabhak Jaypu in Khojana, an artist whose skills, perseverance, passion and humility far outweighed his lack of a formal degree in sculpture. Shrestha and von Schroeder then started looking for an appropriate stone for the chaitya, and that took longer than the search for the sculptor. After seven months they found a stone in a quarry 4km west of Pharping that was the perfect size and texture.

Although the chaitya was carved in four months, finding a way to smoothen the surface with sand-blasting the surface took some time. The completed chaitya was finally flown to Switzerland and installed according to Buddhist rituals by a Tibetan Kagyu Lama last year.

See gallery See video of Jaya Raj Bajracharya at work Read original story in Nepali nepalitimes.com himalkhabar.com

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A piece of Nepal in Switzerland

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H ave any of you ever felt a faint niggling paranoia when typing words like “Islamic Art”, “Quran”, “Islamic State”, or other equally innocuous but potentially flag raising words into search engines just because you want to bring up a Wikipedia page to get more information about what’s in the news?

Well, even if you have heard of Edward Snowden and his shocking exposure of the extent of the American NSA (National Security Agency)’s surveillance network, mostly of ordinary citizens, you may not fully understand the impact of those revelations until you watch Laura Poitras’s chilling documentary Citizenfour. The film is named after the pseudonym Snowden used when he first contacted Poitras via a highly encrypted communication. Perhaps you have already read a few in-depth profiles of Poitras (there are two particularly penetrating pieces by the New Yorker) which will give you an indication of this woman’s tenacity in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, namely her own government’s subterfuges regarding complicity at the highest levels (yes, we are talking about POTUS – the President of the United States) regarding the NSA’s transgressions in violating people’s privacy.

Though the film dwells more on Snowden’s extreme acts of determination (some might call it courage) in exposing the United States’ vast surveillance networks, it is clear these facts could only have been exposed in conjunction with the likes of Poitras, and Glenn Greenwald, another valiant American journalist based out of Brazil.

Whatever you may think of Snowden, a narcissist with delusions of grandeur or a heroic fighter for the freedom of speech and the basic laws of privacy that democracy defends, remember this, we live in a world where everything we do: our mobile phone calls, internet searches, debit cards, even theater tickets, can be tracked should someone be so inclined to do so. Does that make you comfortable?

Citizenfour is a well-made, extremely well shot, sophisticated documentary, no doubt, but it is also the best kind of documentary in that it creates discussion, raising questions that must be answered in today’s digital age.

Of course we want to be safe, but do we want our governments making unilateral decisions regarding our supposed safety and then lying to us about it? Why tap millions of people’s phones (including Angela Merkel’s by the way) and then deny it? Shouldn’t we know what is happening and either be able to discuss it and/or disagree with it? Is fighting terrorism an excuse for monitoring the ordinary citizen at extraordinary levels? What is the cost of that kind of invasion of privacy? Poitras’s troubling documentary will make you ask all these questions and more.

nepalitimes.com
Sharing tolerance

Sara Atzmon was sent to the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp in Germany during the Nazi regime when she was 10. Atzmon survived the Holocaust but 60 of her family members did not.

It was only forty-five years later, aged 55, that Atzmon started documenting her harrowing experiences through paintings. She has never looked back since.

On Tuesday the 82-year-old launched her exhibition, When words fail, at Alliance Française of Kathmandu (AfK) in line with the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

Describing the dozen paintings on display at AfK’s auditorium, she said they aren’t paintings. “This is an outcry,” she told Nepal Times.

Some of these paintings do not exactly have an aesthetic appeal. You can feel the pain in Atzmon’s brushstrokes. The confused forms remind you of a child’s fuzzy and traumatic souvenirs. The chimneys, sinister factors that ring in memories of the Holocaust, are a recurrent theme in Atzmon’s work.

In the powerful From the red carpet to the chimneys, the rail directly leads to an open flame that rises in the form of a Hanukkah menorah.

Hair is an upsetting piece where black dots represent prisoners agglutinated near a house with a high chimney. The only colour is a red cross in the front that probably represents blood. “Some people saw Hitler’s face on the chimney,” said the painter, “but that wasn’t my intention.”

During the weeklong exhibition, documentaries will be screened and Atzmon will share her memories of the Holocaust with various groups of students.

For the past 20 years, she has been travelling around the world talking about her experience. She decided to stop in Nepal after visiting India, Burma and Hong Kong.

“Back home, some friends wondered if Nepalis would care about the Holocaust,” adding, “but I was sure they would be receptive.”

When words fail is the first major event organised in Nepal to commemorate the Holocaust. The event was a joint collaboration between the Israeli, German, French and American embassies, and the United Nations.

Stéphane Huët

When words fail
Alliance Française of Kathmandu
Till 4 February
10am to 5pm
(01)4241163
general.akf@gmail.com

Coffee Pasal

Coffee Pasal certainly lives up to its name of serving the best coffee in Nepal with strong, aromatic brews made from locally sourced beans.

Though the coffee menu boasts of strong vappas like a ristretto (Rs 85) and piccolo latte (Rs 115), my dining partner and I chose to go with milder options such as café latte (Rs 210) and flat white (Rs 210) instead. The latte had a slight hint of sweetness which I personally liked, while the flat white was robust and retained an impressive finish.

Equally impressive was Coffee Pasal’s all-day breakfast menu which included classic English breakfast dishes like Eggs Benedict (Rs 395) and French Toast (Rs 375).

Because we wanted to try something commonly not found in cafes here we opted for the Eggs Benedict and Narayanhiti breakfast (Rs 525).

The Narayanhiti breakfast — named after the Narayanhiti palace just a stone’s throw away from the café — was a breakfast fit for a king. Akin to a Nepali-Mediterranean style big breakfast, it had halloumi (a type of cheese) on rosti, black eyed beans, chicken sausage and two eggs cooked according to preference with the usual sides of grilled tomatoes, sautéed mushrooms, spinach and buttery toast. Everything on the plate tasted absolutely divine and ticked all boxes for the perfect savoury first meal.

I wasn’t sure about the Eggs Benedict when it first arrived on the table. The hollandaise sauce looked a little too thick but it was surprisingly decadent. A good hollandaise should not be oily nor should it taste like an “almost-there” mayonnaise.

And, Coffee Pasal’s hollandaise nailed the balance. Neither greasy nor overly creamy and perfectly seasoned, it was an ideal companion to the crunchy toasted English muffin and mouthwatering bacon and elevated the dish beautifully. I especially loved the unusual addition of diced tomatoes to the rich dish which brought a hint of freshness to the dish. The eggs were also perfectly poached. Adding to the whole dining experience is the warm wooden décor. The café is surrounded by vintage wooden shelves filled with books, magazines and specialty ingredients like red wine vinaigrette and organic pasta transforming the humble café into a bookstore, grocer and a coffee house, all in one place.

In addition, the free wifi at Coffee Pasal also makes it an ultimate place for an afternoon to work, study or just idly sip on a good cup of coffee while looking at the Narayanhiti museum.

Cynthia Choo

How to get there: Coffee Pasal is located in Darbar Marg, above Arrow store.

Nepali Times
Brønchial asthma, also known as asthma, is a persistent inflammatory disease of the body's airways that causes episodic 'attacks' of coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness. The rampant exposure to pollution and the temperature changes of winter may tend to cause bronchial asthma to exacerbate. 

Suman Rai, 30, visited a medical clinic to report a long standing history of cough, shortness of breath and wheezing, sounds from her chest. Her cough often accompanied by 'whistling' sounds from her chest. She also suffered from occasional stuffy and runny nose. Other than those symptoms, she was a healthy young woman. 

After a proper medical exam and running some tests, she was diagnosed with bronchial asthma. Bronchial asthma can be effectively treated with the right medication. Change in lifestyle may also help by avoiding the 'triggers'.

In many individuals, the breathlessness and tightness of the chest is the result of an inflammation. Some may only feel the symptoms when they exercise, or due to pollutants in the air, perfumes, food additives and change in weather among others. 

In bronchial asthma, the airways to the lungs tend to narrow due to muscles tightening or inflammation caused by allergens or respiratory illness. It is uncertain how some people are prone to develop asthma. If allowed to worsen without treatment, bronchial asthma can lead to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Recent edition of medical text books like Harrison's clearly indicate that the severity of asthma does not significantly change over time. People with mild asthma tend to continue to have it mild for life and ones with severe asthma may have it severe as long as they live. Studies have shown that one may have a genetic disposition to asthma but like most health concerns no genetic profile can confirm the possibility. 

Prevalence of asthma is between 1% and 18% with more cases of asthma in developed countries rather than developing ones. Asthma-related death has decreased over the past years due to awareness and treatment.

Being conscious of the cause of one's asthma and avoiding the trigger is key. Depending on the causes of asthma, one can be prescribed anti-inflammatory drugs or inhalers. Inhalers are the most commonly prescribed and effective way to get lifesaving medication to people with asthma. 

However, many people do not get the right instructions to use the inhaler and may use it incorrectly. For example, asthmatic patients need to know how to inhale the steroids puffs properly and not to swallow them down the digestive tract, where it serves no function.

Asthma pathology is in the airways of the lungs and the inhaled steroids need to be deposited in the lungs. Proper hand to mouth coordination is also important for drug delivery. Many Nepali patients are prescribed inhalers without properly being taught how to use this machine for optimal benefit.

Paradoxically trekking in the Himalaya seems to inhibit asthma flare ups in many people, but nonetheless for the asthmatic trekker, it is important to carry adequate asthma medicines on high altitude treks.

Knowledge, awareness and early prognosis of asthma can prevent it from getting worse and save lives.

Seamless streaming

A home media player and streamer adds another layer of convenience to your home entertainment system. If you are tired of having to connect your laptop to your television every time, then maybe you should start giving this media player some thought.

I Xtreamer is one such media player and streamer that is a worthy addition to your home theater setup, one that is easy to install, affordable, and plays almost any media format that you can think of from multiple sources. It can connect to ipod, iphone, ipod and it is not just limited to apple products.

Although the iXtreamer’s design is minimalistic and compact, a stunning design is not what it sets out to achieve. In essence, the iXtreamer is a black and silver plastic box with a sliding panel on the top to accommodate your iDevice, and connectivity inputs in the rear.

The iXtreamer comes to the fore once powered on. It is a very flexible multimedia player that sits on your network, connects to your PC, and streams media to any networked or AV device via AV, USB and LAN connectivity options. The video performance is quite phenomenal.

The iXtreamer does not have a hard drive included, but it is possible to fit a 3.5 inch SATA hard drive with storage capacities of upto a mammoth 3TB, meaning you have lots of space to play with. You can also play movies in full surround sound. The iXtreamer supports streaming media via the internet, with YouTube proving particularly useful. Further, the iXtreamer also supports composite and component audio/video inputs, and optical/coaxial digital audio outputs.

The iXtreamer runs on a customised version of Android OS, and the user interface is simple and easy to get used to via the bundled remote control. Navigating through the menu can be a pain. HDD is necessary for xtreaming. The upside of the iXtreamer is definitely its ability to play almost media format you can think of including, but not limited to, MPEG-1/-2/-4, VOB, MKV, FLV, Xvid, MP3, WMA, WMV and FLAC. The iXtreamer’s firmware is also regularly upgraded to add more media formats and applications. For that home theater experience, the iXtreamer supports DTS and Dolby decoding, so you can enjoy your movies in full surround sound.

Yantrick’s Verdict: Retailing for around the NPR 20K mark and available in most of the tech shops that litter Kathmandu, the iXtreamer is an affordable way to stream your home media on your HDTV.
FROM BAD TO GOOD

It’s not very pleasant to have to cover your mouth while speaking to another person for fear of bad breath. This is one of the major reasons we think twice before getting closer with someone we like. And, if you have to do that often, it may be time to look for a more permanent remedy to bring back that confidence and coziness into that special someone, this Valentine’s season.

Here are some ways to get you fresh breath.

Make sure to brush your teeth twice a day and try to floss every night. Gel toothpastes are known to keep away the bad breath for longer hours. The monofluorophosphate found in such toothpastes, makes the entire tooth structure more resistant to decay. It also strengthens teeth, which aids in repairing early decay before the damage can be seen.

Flossing not only helps remove food and bacteria buildup from between your teeth but also prevents gum disease. Also, brushing teeth with long lasting toothpaste can give you freshness up to 12 hours. Gum disease can be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Always rinse your mouth after a meal to keep it clean. Brushing your teeth with baking soda has shown to reduce acidity in your mouth as well.

Mouthwash is very useful wherever you go. In addition to giving you fresh breath, antiseptic and anti-plaque mouthwash can kill the bacteria that can cause cavities, gingivitis, tooth decay and bad breath. You can gargle with mouthwash 2-3 times a day. Avoid mouthwash with alcohol as it tends to dry your mouth and some research shows that alcohol in mouthwash could also be carcinogenic.

Another way to maintain decent breath is to drink four glasses of warm water in the morning. In addition to keeping you hydrated, it will also improve your digestion, drains toxins from your body and prevents dry mouth that can cause bad breath. Keep your tongue clean with a tongue scraper to remove the tongue plaque which can also cause your mouth to stell foul. Hydration is important for many bodily functions including oral health.

Increase your intake of food rich in vitamin C, as it helps to restrain the formation of plaque and tartar. Live active cultures in some yogurt can also reduce bad breath. Another big contributor of bad breath is cigarettes. If you smoke, it’s very likely that your breath will smell like stale cigarettes. Smoking increases your risk of getting gum diseases, in addition to cancer of the mouth, which is another cause of bad breath. It’s a new year, so why not just quit smoking? It has not done anyone any good.

Have a healthy diet. Foods like apples, celery and carrots are convenient to clean and follow-up will help your oral health.

If you have recently taken your dog for a walk, your breath will smell like stale cigarettes. If you smoke, it’s very likely that your breath will smell like stale cigarettes. Smoking increases your risk of getting gum diseases, in addition to cancer of the mouth, which is another cause of bad breath. It’s a new year, so why not just quit smoking? It has not done anyone any good.

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Another way to maintain decent breath is to drink four glasses of warm water in the morning. In addition to keeping you hydrated, it will also improve your digestion, drains toxins from your body and prevents dry mouth that can cause bad breath. Keep your tongue clean with a tongue scraper to remove the tongue plaque which can also cause your mouth to stell foul. Hydration is important for many bodily functions including oral health.

Increase your intake of food rich in vitamin C, as it helps to restrain the formation of plaque and tartar. Live active cultures in some yogurt can also reduce bad breath. Another big contributor of bad breath is cigarettes. If you smoke, it’s very likely that your breath will smell like stale cigarettes. Smoking increases your risk of getting gum diseases, in addition to cancer of the mouth, which is another cause of bad breath. It’s a new year, so why not just quit smoking? It has not done anyone any good.

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Wombs for Rent

Commercial surrogate motherhood is moving to Nepal because of restrictions in India

BINITA DAHAL

After India tightened rules on commercial surrogacy two years ago, foreigners seeking such services have started trickling into Nepal where rules are murky and regulation weak.

Nepal’s cabinet decided recently to allow foreigners to have surrogate babies as long as the mother is also a foreigner, arguing that this would promote medical tourism in the country. Since then the Department of Immigration records show that many foreigners, including 20 Israelis, have had surrogate babies in private hospitals in Nepal.

Senior Advocate and Activist Sapana Pradhan Malla says many Nepali parents seek her legal advice on surrogacy. “I have no answer for them because there are no laws,” she told Nepali Times. “But I find it really suspicious that foreigners are allowed to have surrogate babies here when there is no provision for Nepalis.”

Activists are worried that in the absence of laws, the cabinet decision on surrogate babies can easily be circumvented. Nepali

TWO SURROGACY METHODS

1. ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION
   - Multiple eggs are retrieved from the woman’s ovaries.

2. IN-VITRO FERTILISATION
   - Sperm is collected and concentrated separately.
   - The eggs are mixed with the sperm for fertilisation to occur.
   - One sperm fertilises an egg and forms an embryo.
Nargis’ baby

"I’ll have your baby"

Radha and Rajesh moved into a new apartment in Gungah, Radha was seven months pregnant, and since Rajesh had to travel frequently for work he got Radha’s mother to stay with her. They hired a nurse named Umila to look after Radha.

Umila had worked with pregnant women before but this one did not seem quite right. She told us Radha was not as careful or cautious about her diet or health. The mother and daughter had strange dynamics, it was as if they had been forced to be together.

Nurse Umila commented on Radha’s strange habit of eating chalk and Radha’s response was, “It’s not like the baby is mine.” Umila had heard of surrogacy but never met a surrogate mother. As it turned out, the husband was actually an agent who recruited Radha, and the mother was a hired caretaker.

“I don’t pay for anything and soon I will have more money,” Radha would tell Umila. Radha went into labour in her eighth month and was rushed to hospital where her ‘husband’ reminded the doctor several times that Radha should have a baby via caesarean because she was too weak to give birth naturally. When the baby was born, Umila was shocked to see that it was fair-skinned with light-grey eyes.

Radha is among many surrogate mothers in Nepal who were induced or forced to have surrogate babies for foreign parents. Shristi Pradhan of the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD) who has researched the subject said: “We know commercial surrogacy is practiced but no one wants to talk.”

Anjana Raddhanayak, Radha, Rajesh and Umila are pseudonyms.

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Federalism revisited

Chaitanya Mishra in setopati.com, 27 January

There is now a debate over whether the CA can pass the new constitution through a two-thirds majority. Obviously, that is not the best option. It would be much better if a new constitution is passed by consensus. If that can’t be done, there should be unanimous agreement on as many key issues as possible. But we can’t wait forever if a consensus is impossible.

The opposition alliance led by the UCPN (Maoist) reject idea of using a two-thirds majority, saying this is not a numbers game. But the question arises: why then bring stability are now pressuring the state to ignore them to be too weak. This does not help Nepal. This country’s political instability. It may be because in dispensing dubious advice that will only prolong this country’s political instability. It may be because they want to make sure that their interests lie in a weak and poor Nepal, or that if Nepal prospers for all the suffering they brought to their ethnicity-based federal states? Then why do they not demand rights in their ethnicity-based federal states? Why do they not demand rights for only their people to become Chief Minister for the first two consecutive terms? If we all are fundamentally different from each other, we will never co-exist in one state and may need separate ones.

If we had looked deeper into national security, we would have gone for north-south federal units. We cannot expect our two giant neighbours to always be friends as they are now. If our federal units will have threats from one another, it will be from neighbours and north-south units would provide a degree of security.

The State Restructuring Committee suggested that federal states be created on the basis of ethnicity, language, culture, geography and history. But, ethnicity means language, culture, geography and history and if it is separated it will be regressive and underdevelopment. Issues of language, culture, geography and history can be addressed in district or local level of future federal units. We should honour the rich linguistic, cultural and historical diversity of the Nepali society, but not divisive ethnicity.

It is true that some castes in Nepal are underprivileged. Are they seeking federalism to eliminate this caste-based inequality? Are they demanding ethnicity-based federal states because they think we used to be different, are different, and will always be different? Then why do they not demand prior rights in their ethnicity-based federal states? Why do they not demand rights democratic state is always expected to ensure equality of all its citizens. The notion that a person is unequal just because he is born to a ‘low-caste’ is not acceptable in a democracy. If the state cannot immediately eliminate this inequality, it must come up with a timeframe to do so.

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No Prachanda, no constitution

Surya Khadka in mynamsar.com, 27 January

My father was branded a traitor by Maoist rebels during the war. His life was threatened and he was forced to leave the village. The Maoists also tortured my brother repeatedly on false allegations. I resent the Maoists for all the suffering they brought upon my family. And I know there are many others who feel the same. But as a level-headed person, I don’t agree with the NC and UML’s decision to sideline the Maoists from the constitution-writing process. Despite performing poorly in the CA2 elections, the UCPN(M) is still the third largest party. The fact that the ruling government had to appease the Maoist leader Prachanda who lost in the elections also speaks of his influence. Prachanda is one of my favourite political leaders, and I appreciate Girja Prasad Koirala’s efforts to bring him into mainstream politics. Drafting a constitution by pushing him aside is not wise. Even if it is promulgated, a constitution which is not based on consensus will not last long. Nepal’s political stagnancy can only end when the contentious issues are addressed. A logical conclusion is possible only with Prachanda’s participation. Keeping him out could invoke a new conflict which will breed more extremists like Rast and Biplab. It is in everybody’s best interest if the peace process is concluded by writing the new constitution by including opposition voices.
HIGHLIGHTS OF INDIA-NEPAL PARTNERSHIP

A multi-layered programme comprising more than 500 completed and ongoing projects at a cost over NRs. 75 billion in key economic sectors based on the priorities of the Government of Nepal.

FLAGSHIP COMPLETED PROJECTS

- Five-storied ODP complex of Bir Hospital, Kathmandu
- BRKHS, Dharan
- Manoharan Memorial Polytechnic, Buxaung
- 897 KM of the East-West Highway
- 22 bridges over Kolarup - Mahakali section of the East-West highway
- 904 KM Optical Fiber along the East-West Highway
- 8 storied National Trauma Centre, Kathmandu

MAJOR ON GOING PROJECTS

- Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at 4 points on the India-Nepal Border
- Cross-Border railway links
- 26 KM long Dakshinkali - Katelpani road/road-bond
- Installation of 2700 Shallow Tube Wells
- Construction of National Police Academy
- Construction of Nepal Bharat Maitri Parishad Bhavan

SMALL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (SDPs)

Ongoing and completed

- 237 school/urban building projects
- 47 health related projects
- Work on 23 roads/4 bridges
- Projects on drinking water, cold storage, river training, tube wells, electrification and capacity building
- 442 ambulances and 86 buses purchased
- 317 Eye Care Camps organised by Nepal Red Cross Society
- 50,000 diabetes tests to be conducted in association with Gandhi Global Family Nepal
- Goitre Control Programme ongoing since 1973, NRs. 600 million spent

BILATERAL TRADE & INVESTMENT

- India-Nepal Bilateral Trade - NRs. 543.15 billion
- 38% of total approved FDI in Nepal from India
- USD 1 billion concessional Line of Credit
- Pancheshwar Development Authority coordinated for implementation of the 600 MW project
- Power Trade Agreement signed
- Extended NRs. 3 billion for enhancement construction on Kamala, Latibekya, Bugmati and Khalikot Rivers
- Power Development Agreement for Arun III and Upper Kamala Hydropower Projects (900 MWs each) signed
- Tourism and Traditional Systems of Medicine agreements were signed. Mobile soil testing van presented to Govt. of Nepal
- Extended NRs. 48 million to landslide and flood victims of Nepal

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

- Direct bus service, Kathmandu - Delhi
- Motor Vehicle agreement signed
- Training imparted to officers of Government of Nepal in Customs, Excise and Narcotics control

EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION

- 3000 scholarships to Nepalese students every year
- 250 slots for IITEC courses every year
- Nepal-Bharat Maitri Shiksha Karyakram launched

CULTURAL COOPERATION

- Kathmandu-Uttar Pradesh, Jaipur- Ayodhya and Lumbini- Nalanda became sister cities
- Regular classes of Hindustani Classical Music, Tabla, Bharatnatyam Dance and Yoga at Indian Cultural Centre
- ‘Festival of India’ in 2015-16 to be organised

INDIAN EX-SERVICEMEN WELFARE

- Pension to ex-servicemen NRs. 20 billion per year
- Other Than Pension (OTP) payments worth NRs. 47 million
- Army Group Insurance grants and Medical Benefit Schemes
- 17 Sister Projects implemented
- 1019 Drinking Water Projects implemented
- Three ICHR polytechnics at Kathmandu, Pokhara and Bharat providing cashless medical facility
Becoming a single-minded determination to take the bull by the horns of a dilemma, and after six years of can-do attitude to write a new constitution, our legislators have finally propelled Nepal into the world headlines – something that had eluded us even though we tried waging a bloody civil war, a mass massacre of water buffalos every five years, and breaking the world record in making the largest human flag.

We only have The Respectable Member of the August House Comrade Umesh Yadav to thank for finally getting Nepal an honourable mention on the Bill Maher Show. This is the kind of international publicity that the Nepal Bored of Tourism wouldn’t be able to buy even for a million bucks. Suddenly, Nepal is not just the land of brave Gurkhas and sure-footed Sherpas, but also of members of parliament who dismember parliament. Type chair+parliament and suddenly it is Nepal all over Google image search. #EjectedChair is trending on twitter, overtaking #ElectricChair.

Such international recognition doesn’t come by every day in the history of a nation, which is all the more reason for us to strategise about how we can take this achievement and build on it. We have to make hay while the sun shines and aggressively push Nepal as an adventure destination.

For too long, Nepal has been known as a land of peace-loving people where the Buddha was reportedly born, but in this modern age where might is right this docile brand image needs to be changed so that we are taken more seriously by the international commune.

The Ministry of Firanghi Affairs has been quick off the mark to drive home the message that we can’t be pushed around anymore by summoning European ambassadors to warn of retaliatory action. In the spirit of diplomatic reciprocity and in accordance to the Vienna Convention, Nepal is planning to take the following actions with immediate effect:

- Instruct our Brussels-based ambassador to take a tourist bus to Flanders to meet with Flemish separatist leaders and have a couple of De Konincks off the tap.
- Ask our Plenipotentiary in the Court of St James to issue a press statement questioning why the British Monarch can only be from a certain sect and whether this isn’t a violation of various international human rights covenants that the UK is signatory to.
- Get the Nepal Embassy in Washington DC to issue a travel advisory for parts of the United States recently affected by race riots, and advise Nepalis to exercise extreme caution, cancel all non-essential travel, and to be fully armed if they have to visit affected areas. While he’s at it Dr Karki may also want to strongly lobby Congress to declare new federal provinces for African-Americans and Hispanics along the Mexican border.
- Nepal will take the lead in getting a consortium of South Asian embassies at the EU to urge its member states to exercise restraint and work in a spirit of consensus to protect unity and racial harmony in Europe.

CA Chair Name Bang, being a stout Marxist-Leninist himself, is a devotee of the teachings of two European philosophers, so we don’t understand why fellow comrades from the Maoist persuasion have their knickers in knots over his keeping options open by taking the House forward for a vote, thus buying time for negotiations.

The UML is a party that excels in the art of improvisation by sitting on the fence in flip-flops and letting the chips fall where they may. After all, it was Marx (Groucho, not Karl) who once said: “If you come to a fork on the road, take it”. And the UML also follows very seriously what its other guru, Vladimir Ilyich, preached in his heydays: “Learn. Learn. Learn. Wash your dirty Lenin in public.”

In the love triangle within the Cash Mao between PKD, BBi and NKS, the not-so-Baddie Comrade Qazi has suddenly found himself in the doghouse after BRB declared war on him on FB. Buttrai himself is suddenly lovey-dovey with Lotus Flower and has outmaneuvered everyone who dared to push the constitution to the drafting committee. Bijay the Gutch also tried his best to come up with a compromise after negotiations failed, but PKD got a call and went outside to take it. He came back in and all deals were off. Our moles at NT have traced the call. In future, why don’t they just wear bluetooth earpieces which can transmit live audio and receive instructions discreetly while seated at the table?