

H₂O

By most international standards Kathmandu should be considered uninhabitable because this city of 2.5 million has no functioning water mains. But residents have learnt to improvise: they pump ground water, buy water from tankers or collect the rain. But the mainstay of water supply for inner city Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur are still the water spouts built by the Malla kings 400 years ago (*below*). Fifteen years behind schedule, the Melamchi project to supply water to Kathmandu Valley is likely to be further delayed.



22 MARCH
WORLD
WATER
DAY 2015

SPECIAL COVERAGE

PAGE 16-17

A top-down view of a white ceramic coffee cup filled with a latte. The coffee foam is decorated with a simple smiley face using dark coffee powder. The eyes are two small circles, and the mouth is a wide, curved line. The cup sits on a white saucer, and the background is a dark, textured surface.

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KENJI KWO

DELETE 'INTERIM'

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

A TEMPORARY CONSTITUTION

THE DEADLINE

BY **DAMAKANT JAYSHI**
PAGE 4

JUSTICE IN TRANSITION

LEGALESE

BY **BINITA DAHAL**
PAGE **15**

JUMPING OFF IN JOMSOM



Jomsom used to be a windy airport town where trekkers waited for a flight back. But with the completion of the road to Pokhara, it is a jumping-off point for treks into unexplored side-valleys of the Kali Gandaki.

FACING-SAVING ON FACEBOOK

What if Nepal's netas were all on Facebook? The Ass ruminates on the possibilities of social networking for political networking.

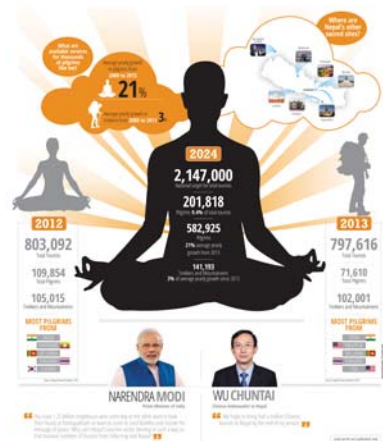


PAGE 7-9

PAGE 22

Can Nepal attract half a million pilgrims by 2024?

¹⁰The *pu* implies keepers (guards) of the altitude of the gods (ow). Can we live up to the name to turn our country into the stable of wisdom spiritually?



DESTINATION NEPAL

PAGE 19-20

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DELETE 'INTERIM'

It has been more than a month since the Constituent Assembly has been suspended to give time for the top leadership of the main parties to forge an agreement. Just that fact alone should prove where the real power lies in this country. It doesn't lie with the people, but with a bunch of double-speaking men who go round and round in circles. The CA has been relegated to a rubber-stamp body that is there only to approve what this exclusive coterie decides. The trouble is that they haven't been able to agree on anything.

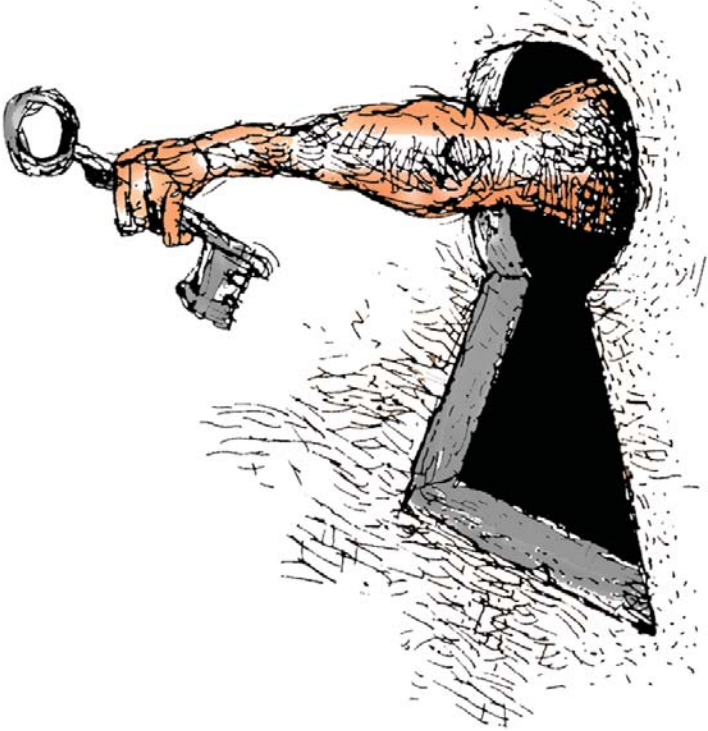
There are three main players here. The ruling NC-UML coalition, the UCPN(M) led alliance with Madhesi and other smaller parties, and the Hindu-right RPP-N, which is gaining strength because of public disillusionment, an anti-secular wave, and geopolitical factors.

The operational strategy of both NC-UML and Maoist-Madhesi at the moment can be best described as 'talk loudly and carry a big stick'. The NC-UML has threatened to take federalism to a vote in the CA unless the opposition does what it says. And the Maoist-Madhesi front is warning of another round of nationwide strikes early next month unless the government does what it says. Calling this a stalemate would be an understatement. It is hopelessly stuck.

The real reason for the sudden failure of negotiations last week was the Supreme Court decision rejecting clauses in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act that would grant sweeping amnesty for wartime excesses. As Binita Dahal writes on page 15, this has given the ruling parties, state security forces and the Maoists sleepless nights – leading to talks on re-merging the UCPN(M) and the CPN-M, and the announcement of street protests. Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal is also livid that a tranche of funds being ferreted into the country from the Virgin Islands has been blocked by the Rastra Bank.

Despite this there has been one unanimous understanding: to try to pass 'a constitution' on 29

The best solution for now would be to adopt the basic document of the Interim Constitution 2007 and add the agreed bits from the new draft.



May, which happens to be Republic Day. We'll believe that when we see it, but it does offer a glimmer of hope that some politicians are now so embarrassed by repeatedly letting the people down that they want to pass a constitution by hook or by crook, even if it means postponing the divisive issue

of federalism.

The best alternative plan we have heard is the one of adopting the basic document of the Interim Constitution 2007, adding the agreed bits of the new draft on form of government, judiciary and election procedures, and promulgate that. To make this option more acceptable to the people, it could coincide with the announcement of a date for local elections.

For nearly two decades now, the country hasn't had elections for village, district and municipal councils. The result is there for all to see: the erosion of accountability at the local level, a corruption pandemic, extortion and blockage of infrastructure projects by goons enjoying political protection, and last but not least, the mountains of garbage on Kathmandu's streets.

Clause 38.1 of the Interim Constitution already has inbuilt provisions in its preamble to address discrimination on the basis of class, ethnicity, geography, culture, religion, or gender, and restructure the state along principles of democracy and inclusion. Frankly, it is not clear how federalism is going to be the cure-all to all these ills. In fact, the misgivings are now shared by some of the top leaders across the political spectrum and sections of the international community including our neighbours to the north and south.

As Damakant Jayshi argues on page 4, the Interim Constitution is actually more progressive than the new draft with regard to issues like granting citizenship in the name of the mother. Adopting an amended version of the Interim Constitution on 29 May with announcement of local elections would be least disruptive and most forward-looking way to end this debilitating deadlock, and allow the country to move ahead to catch up with development, investment and economic growth. Let's face it: successive public opinion polls have shown that jobs and services are what most Nepalis are interested in, not identity, federalism, secularism, or even a new constitution.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

AIRPORT TROUBLE

Very frustrating that the authorities can't seem to get anything right ('Bad just got worse', Om Astha Rai, #749). The same CAAN responsible for the TIA management is in charge of safety oversight of airlines registered with them and operating in Nepal. Last month, a video which shows a shocking lack of concern for safety by a Nepali airline was posted on YouTube. The matter was also reported to CAAN but the officials who were happy to receive some extra cash on the side took no action against the airline. No wonder the EU blacklisted Nepal.

Airline Guy

■ Anything that the government needs to do, they will stall for as long as possible. Just look at the whole constitution fiasco.

Kaok

■ The chaotic situation at the airport is just a small glimpse of what is wrong with this country and its leaders, all of whom seem to have zero morals and commitment towards fulfilling their duties.

Bir Bahadur

TOURISM

Nepal is ruined for all tourists except the Chinese ('Tourism flatlines, Chinese are up', #749). Pokhara used to be a nice, peaceful place but now it is unbearable with pollution, large buildings and traffic. On top of that the Chinese are everywhere, they are buying land

and opening businesses, I wonder why the Nepal government didn't allow the Americans or the Europeans to do the same years ago?

Com Cruise

■ I do not think any foreigner is legally allowed to buy immovable properties in Nepal. There is no law that currently permits the buying/selling of immovable properties to foreigners, so the question of Chinese buying land is irrelevant. Yes, investors for business and raising employment are heartily welcome.

Sam

■ We should focus on tourism, period. Not Chinese-centric tourism which would be a bigger folly than not focusing on tourism in the first place.

Namah

ENERGY

Well argued, logical and makes perfect sense ('A new energy mix for a new Nepal', Suraj Pandey, #749). Installing village-level biomass gasifier power-plants in the Tarai is a great idea but what we truly need is a group of implementers who have the common sense to see the benefits of such an initiative. However if there were kickbacks to be made, I am sure the leaders would immediately jump at the idea.

C Jha

NEPALI SMARTPHONE

Where are the chipsets from, what about the GPU, and future update to software ('The Nepali smartphone',

Gizmo, #749)?

It is great news that Nepal has its own brand of smartphone, but we cannot compromise on quality just because we want to support Nepali products. A detailed review is needed. But I would be very happy to buy this phone if it performs well.

Sidd

■ Great news. Hopefully it is a great phone worth its price.

Rohit Rai

E-SPECIAL

■ I guess that's another way to get new equipment by setting fire to the ones we have ('Garbage collection resumes', 16 March). Now let's spread out our begging hands towards the donor countries and see who will give us the brand new ones. We can also torch the houses we live in, we might get lucky and get new ones built. Stupid pyromaniacs!!!

Bairagi Khukuri

■ No one is above the law and Col Lama shouldn't be treated in any special way ('Bring Col Lama back', 13 March). Families who lost their loved ones in the insurgency are still waiting for justice. It is time their voices are heard.

Yam Gurung

■ What a joke ('New deadline', 11 March). I thought this news-piece was about parties agreeing to a new constitution, but it's agreeing to a new deadline. Honestly, I wish the King was back in the palace,

because he would teach these syndicate of gangsters a lesson they will never forget. Just like when he sacked Deuba for missing his deadline. These leaders have no discipline and integrity, they keep paying lip service to the people, but have little to show for it. The only thing they are capable of is extending their tenures and feeding on state resources and benefits.

Guest

ASS

I sent this week's Ass column to someone who has no idea about Nepal and its issues ('Feeling like god already', Ass, #749). The guy could not stop laughing. Absolute classic!

N

■ Ass, this one's hard to beat. An article in the same issue also showed rapid increase in number of Chinese tourists. If more Chinese tourists are arriving and our strategy is to make it difficult for tourists to leave Nepal, in another generation we may become the south-western-most territory of China. Positive for Nepalis: we may become an economic superpower in just a generation with the philosophy of 'not doing today what can be done tomorrow' (and an implicit understanding that tomorrow never comes). Keep on shining the light, Donkey.

ANepali



DEVAKI BISTA (54 LIKES)

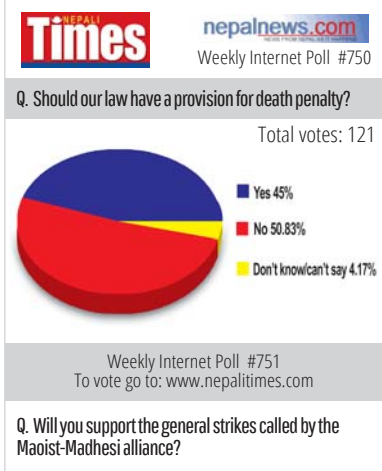
Most liked on Facebook
HITCHED: A Chinese couple getting ready for a wedding portrait on the steps of the Nyatapola Temple in Bhaktapur on Monday.

Most shared on Facebook
Nepali leads leukemia discovery by Sahina Shrestha

Most popular on Twitter
Preserving Nepal's soul by Stéphane Huët (16 retweets, 23 favourites)

Most visited online page
Bad just got worse by Om Astha Rai (1109 views)

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Tourism flatlines, Chinese are up





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A temporary constitution

Why not just cut and paste the Interim Constitution and get it over with?

Given the inability (or unwillingness) of the main political players to resolve the dispute over federalism, it would be prudent to look for alternatives.

At the time of going to press, the stumbling blocks were still the five disputed districts, and power-sharing after the constitution. They have given themselves another deadline of Republic Day on 29 May as the new C-Day.



THE DEADLINE

Damakant Jayshi

The 30-party opposition alliance (many of which are not represented in the Constituent Assembly) has said it will talk and protest on the streets simultaneously. The ruling parties' response: We will talk and take the process forward for a vote in the CA simultaneously.

It is still likely that the parties would be able to strike a deal on their electoral future regarding the districts of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Kailali and Kanchanpur. But ironically, the real obstacles to talks seemed to be dividing up important constitutional posts among themselves. Trust their ability to give the impression



BIKRAM RAI

that this quest for raw power is actually about the lofty goals of inclusiveness, identity, equality and Nepal's integrity and sovereignty. And identity is just a code word for the dreaded ethnicity-based state restructuring.

The parties are mentally poles apart, so they may very well fail to reach a deal. It seems both our northern and southern neighbours are having doubts about federalism and fear that it may lead to more instability in Nepal.

Then there are politicians who are passing remarks like, "What's the haste? This CA still has three more years." With the most

obvious exception of the ailing prime ministerial aspirant KP Oli of the UML, almost everyone else would be perfectly happy if the current stalemate dragged on.

NC president and Prime Minister Sushil Koirala thinks it would let him stay in Baluwatar for some more time. Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is positioning himself to unseat Koirala as party president and subsequently as PM, needs more time to get his act together ahead of the party's General Convention in September. Right now Deuba is hoping for a public backlash against Koirala for his failure to deliver on the statute.

Even Oli's comrades in the

UML are in no particular hurry to pass a constitution, they are too busy trying to undermine him and secretly hope that his gamble on CA vote will fail.

The UCPN (M) and their Madhesi allies are planning to cash in on any rift between the NC and UML that may be the result of delays in the constitution. With numbers in the CA stacked heavily against them, the opposition alliance will keep on chanting their mantra of consensus.

The least painful alternative would be to accept the Interim Constitution of 2007 as a permanent one to provide closure to the transition period.

Of course, the hard work begins soon after ensuring true decentralisation decision-making process, promoting inclusive policies, ensuring local bodies elections for service delivery and working on governance. The debate on federalism can continue in a less charged atmosphere.

The Interim Constitution could continue until the parties are able to discard their petty interests and work sincerely towards a new statute. After all, the 2007 document is the only one that has been accepted by most pro-change parties, including by default even the breakaway factions from the UCPN (M).

This would end the 'business as usual' attitude, end the prolonged transition during which the government is unaccountable and incapable of its primary duties. Moreover, the Interim Constitution has institutionalised concepts like republicanism, secularism and federalism.

And lastly, the real beauty of the interim statute is that it bestows the rights of transfer of citizenship to women as well, unlike the current draft which has a conservative and regressive proposal that bars citizenship in the name of the mother. 🇳🇵

@damakant

नागरिक

नागरिक दैनिक आफना समस्त एक लाख ग्राहक सदस्यहरुलाई यो विश्वासिलो साथको लागि हार्दिक धन्यवाद ज्ञापन गर्दछ ।
अगामी दिनहरुमा पनि यस्तै साथको अपेक्षा गर्दै नागरिक दैनिकलाई अझै सशक्त बनाउने बाचा गर्दछ ।

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सुरज वैद्य, आयुर्वेद, वेद अर्थात् जीवन अर्थात् स्वास्थ्य, वेद विज्ञ

अंशु शर्मा, नर्तिका

प्रद्युम्न श्रेष्ठ, वरिष्ठ उपचार, नेपाल उद्योग बणिज्य महासंघ

डा. या. युवराज सिंग, वरिष्ठ अधिवक्ता तथा पूर्व न्यायाधीश

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सुनिल पोखरेल, नेपाल बाल परीक्षण, वरिष्ठ

मानिस श्रेष्ठ, लाल श्रेष्ठ, स्वास्थ्य, सौभाग्य र समाज, स्वास्थ्य, लाल श्रेष्ठ

संगिता श्रेष्ठ, जलविद्युत, जलविद्युत

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रमेश श्रेष्ठ, वरिष्ठ उपचार, प्रबन्ध निर्देशक, हरेक सुख

BIZ BRIEFS

One more

Qatar Airways has added a second A350 XWB aircraft to its fleet for flights to Frankfurt. With the addition, the airline will now fly to Frankfurt twice a day exclusively with the A350 XWB.



Go digital

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Everest Bank on Monday donated computers to Shree Ram Sakhi Mohit Singh Janata HSS in Sarlahi. The bank has been supporting infrastructure development of several public and community schools in rural Nepal.

Enjoy exchange

Laxmi Intercontinental, the authorised distributor of Hyundai Cars in Nepal, is organising an exchange camp from 16 to 21 March throughout its outlets in the country. The company has announced various deals on exchanges and upgrade including a loyalty bonus of up to Rs 75,000 and exchange bonus of up to Rs 50,000.



Colourful meet

Pashupati Paints concluded its Annual Dealers Meet at Hotel Hyatt Regency in Kathmandu on 14 March. The company officially launched its newest paint, Luxuria Style at the event attended by 250 dealers from Nepal.

Golden Jubilee

Bhajuratra Engineering and Sales has announced scholarships for 20 students from ten rural VDCs where the company operates, and free cataract operations for 50 people at the Hetauda Community Eye Hospital.



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If it bleeds, it still leads

Even in the age of citizen journalism, we can't seem to cover the good news

Are journalists supposed to give the public what it wants or what we think the public needs? Do we really know what the public wants? Just as tabloid journalism resorted to sensationalism, reporters in the age of citizen journalism are driven by the need to maximise hits. The quality of our online stories, our Tweets, our Instagram pictures, or videos



BETWEEN THE LINES
Tsering Dolker Gurung



BIKRAM RAI

on Vine are judged by their eye ball counts, retweets, mentions, shares, or feedbacks. Hence, the Youtube clip of a cute cat will always get more hits than a news piece on the constitutional deadlock. Page views-led journalism today afflicts the mainstream media as well, since they compete with social networking sites on the Internet. While looking for the most dramatic version of a story, we often miss out on reporting new and original angles. We have written the story in our heads before going out in the field, and are reluctant to change our

narrative even if the interviews deviate from our pre-determined angle. On 10 March, Tibetans all over the world marked Uprising Day. The date doesn't mean much to local journalists, but correspondents and photojournalists for foreign news agencies in Kathmandu have marked it off in their calendars. And they were all there last Tuesday, keeping vigil with the riot police for any signs of a demonstration. At a teashop in Ekantakuna a group of photographers from international news agencies sat waiting for something to happen. A photographer friend had been tipped off that a planned demonstration would break out any moment. Images of scuffles, protestors being dragged into police vans and weeping refugees make for shots that can go international. The images are also the ones most likely to be picked up by an editor for the 'photo of the day' in some online site. None of the photographers were interested in a prayer ceremony being held at the community monastery down the road in memory of the 136 Tibetans

who lost their lives in self-immolations. The headline 'Tibetans hold prayer ceremony for lost lives' doesn't stand a chance against 'Tibetans in police custody after scuffles'. To the dismay of our photojournalist colleagues, there was no protest that day. "Things used to be so much fun before," said a Kathmandu-based correspondent for an international news agency referring to the photogenic police vs monks confrontations on the streets of Kathmandu before the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The only time it seems that

the international wires are interested in reporting anything about Tibetans in Nepal is when they are staging an anti-China protest. It fits neatly in Western media's narrative, but ignores the larger issues of the refugees, their lives and their truths. And the only time reporters can be seen chasing their Tibetan sources is on the Dalai Lama's birthday or the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising, rest of the year as far as the western media is concerned, Nepal's Tibetans don't exist. For example, they could cover the issue of undocumented Tibetan refugees born in Nepal? Or young Tibetans who have to leave for India because they are not entitled to any basic rights by law here? Or even of Tibetans who have stayed on in Nepal, prospered and contributed to Nepal's economy. Bad news makes great headlines, good news not so much. That also explains why a London-based newspaper will gladly publish an 'expose' on brick kilns employing children, but ignore the ones which have moved towards cleaner, energy-efficient technologies. Stories about migrant workers suffering in Gulf states are ubiquitous, but success stories about Nepalis who have returned and made a future for themselves? Nah, that's not news. @Chenreeyang



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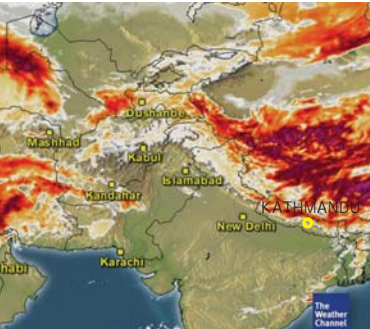
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१ जनालाई Seiko Chronograph घडी

४२" CG LED टी.भी
१ जनालाई

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Spring is quickly giving way to summer as the temperature climbs to the mid-twenties over the weekend in Kathmandu. With some low pressure systems having passed us this week, the sky will be clear, mornings still a bit chilly at 11 degrees, but afternoons should be breezy and balmy. There is the possibility of cloud buildup in the high valleys that may lead to isolated mountain storms.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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SPIN MASTER:
A villager spins yarn using a traditional drop spindle in Lower Mustang.

MUSTANG IN MARCH

When construction for the road from Beni to Lo Manthang was completed last year, many speculated that it would bring an end to Mustang's mystery. After all, it was its inaccessibility and 'forbidden' status that attracted many searchers of Shangri-La to pay high entry permit fees and visit a region nestled on Nepal's

northern border with Tibet. Eased accessibility has made the district more modern, but the locals are more wary of the need to preserve their unique Tibetan traditions. The annual archery competition in Marpha that has been organised for the past 100 years by Thakali families of the area has changed. While contestants could earlier come in casuals,

the organisers in 2010 made it mandatory for participants to wear the official Nepali daura suruwal (see page 8-9). Lo Manthang may be the ultimate destination in Mustang but there are also many obscure villages in Lower Mustang that are as mystical and can be reached on a day's hike from Jomsom.

JOMSOM SPECIAL

PAGE 8-9

HONDA

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JUMP OFF FROM JOMSOM

It used to be that Jomsom was just a windy airport town where trekkers waited for their flights after the Annapurna Circuit. But with a new road Jomsom is now just a day's drive from Pokhara and a jump off point for many short treks around this trans-Himalayan Valley with its dramatic scenery. The beauty of Jomsom today is that you can make it your base for a leisurely Himalayan holiday. These are just three of the short treks you can do from Jomsom to its surrounding side-valleys.



- Thini
- Dhumba
- Kutsab Teranga Monastery

This 4-5 hour hike from Jomsom is easy paced and allows trekkers ample time to take in the sights and sounds of the village. Walk along the narrow paths along terraces of barley before arriving at Thini. Next, meander along the spacious rock roads that run through Jomsom before arriving at the gorgeous Dhumba Lake where views of Dhaulagiri and Tukuhe Peak greet you. There is a little teahouse on the edge of the lake where you can sit and enjoy the view.

To complete the day's trek, you can choose to walk up to the nearby Kutsab Teranga Monastery. Pine trees line the path to the gumba while prayer flags decorate small ashrams and stupas built on top of the hill.

Difficulty level: 2/5



- Jomsom
- Kagbeni
- Jhong (Lunch)
- Muktinath

The route from Kagbeni to Muktinath offers gorgeous views of Upper Mustang's ochre-coloured landscape and the sweep of the Kali Gandaki. Stop by Jhong for lunch before continuing up to Muktinath. Though this trek does not require steep ascents, the long up and down requires stamina and a steady walking pace if one wishes to reach the famous temple by sunset.

Difficulty level: 4.5/5



CYNTHIA CHOO

Marpha’s century old archery competition is proof of how much the Thakali people value their culture

For a week every year in Marpha, some 50 men gather in a courtyard wielding traditional wooden bows and arrows to take part in an archery competition called ‘Termi Torenlā’ which means ‘new beginnings’ in the Thakali language. The men take turns to aim at a single black target in the middle of a rectangular wooden board 30 metres across the field. The competition usually lasts for about ten hours a day, or until a competitor manages to hit the bull’s eye. Points are then calculated before a new round starts the day after.

For centuries, the bow and arrow have been synonymous with hunting. But when asked if hunting was practiced in Marpha, Bhakti Hirachan, one of the competition’s organisers said: “We’ve never hunted animals for food.”

A community that survived on subsistence farming and animal rearing, wood and bamboo were part of Marpha’s culture since the very beginning. Hirachan said: “We made use of our natural resources by making bows and arrows, and we organise this archery competition as a way to bring people together and remember our culture.”

Though there are hits and misses, Termi



ALL PICS: CYNTHIA CHOO



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- Dhakarjung tower
- Phalyak village
- Phakling village
- Kagbeni



For those who crave a little adventure, there is the challenging trek up to Dhakarjung tower, where the telecom station for Jomsom is located. This alternative trekking route was discovered by Tripple Gurung, a former airline pilot who now runs Om's Home in Jomsom. This short but steep walk has plenty of adventure in the form of snowy trails especially along the northern slopes.

Seasoned trekkers can expect to reach Dhakarjung top in about two hours, before taking another hour or so to get down. Your lunch stop will be most likely be at Phalyak village, from where you can continue on to Kagbeni.

Those who want to trek further can stay a night in Kagbeni before going on to Muktinath the next day. For those who wish to return to Jomsom, jeep rides are available throughout the day, with the vehicle leaving when the maximum capacity (12) is met.

Difficulty level: 3.5/5

Difficulty level has been assessed by a first-time trekker.

Torenla has hit the bull's eye when it comes to preserving Marpha's unique cultural heritage.

It is compulsory that competitors come in the traditional Nepali dress. "About five, six years ago, people used to show up in jeans and t-shirts, and we felt the Nepali culture was fading away," said Hirachan.

Competitors must be dressed in the traditional daura suruwal and wear a dhaka topi (Nepali cap) or else they are fined Rs 25.

Termi Torenla is also symbolic of the close-knitted Marpha community and unites men from all four families — the Hirachans, Lachans, Jawarchans and Panachans — who form two teams to participate in the competition.

When the drums sound and one member takes aim, the others stand in a line behind him holding up branches of juniper. The repeated rituals during the competition also allude to the recurring red and white colours that paint the door fronts of all the houses in Marpha.

"Changpa [juniper] represents good luck and is a form of encouragement for the team members," said Hirachan, who is also a social worker in the village.

Women provide support during the competition when the men are unable to hit the target, a tradition that is reminiscent of how women are similarly important in the production of Marpha's Apple Brandy, through their expertise in the distillery process.

The participation of the Dalit community — traditionally drummers and musicians — is also symbolic of Marpha's determination to include other communities in its festivals.

"We don't discriminate against them. They are important as they provide music to signify the start and end of every round," said Hirachan.

As the rhythmic beats of the drums continue to sound throughout the day, the men occasionally break out into a traditional folk song with the repeated lines: "Everything is changing, but not our culture". 🇳🇵

Small is more beautiful

Times reviews three guest houses along the Pokhara-Jomsom road



KENJI KWOK

HANA NO IE (AGRO-RESORT)

Once opened to only Japanese tourists, Hana no ie, located only 15km from Pokhara, now welcomes guests from all over the world to its agro-resort of traditional mud-walled cottages, matched with the

scenic view of the Annapurna range at the top of the Astam Kot hill.

Its bold concept of disconnecting guests from their electronics by not providing internet connection or television sets in the rooms is one of its unique characteristics, ensuring that you soak in all that nature has to offer.

The 10-room accommodation also has its own organic farm that supplies the freshest vegetables for its meals, specialising in authentic Japanese cuisine amongst others. The 80-ropani resort aims to be self-sustainable by adapting beekeeping for honey, buffaloes and goats for milk, yogurt, butter, and the production of bio gas from manure.

If you would like to prepare your own meal, the staff at Hana no ie will be there to guide you through every step, from picking the vegetables straight from the farm to whipping up a sumptuous meal. Hana no ie also makes its own coffee.

Being able to end each day unwinding in the *goemon-buro*, a traditional Japanese hot bath heated using firewood, is probably the best thing about the resort.

www.hananoie-nepal.com

★★★★★

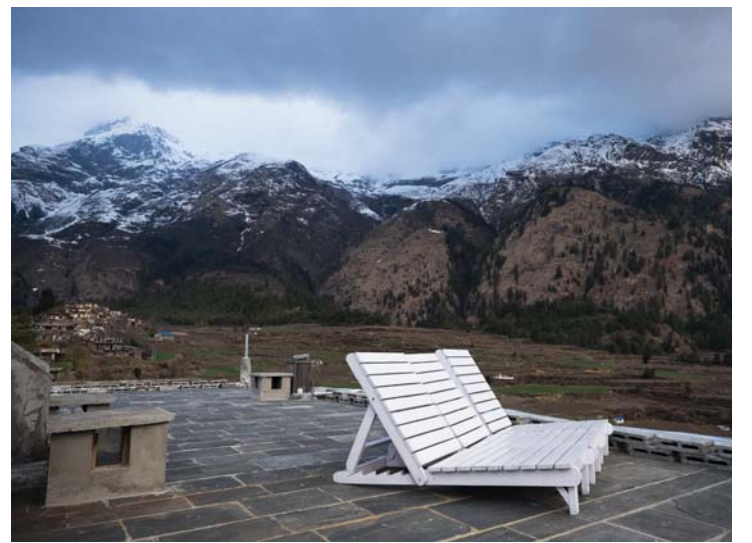
LODGE THASANG VILLAGE

Lodge Thasang Village was named after Thasang, a collection of 13 villages from North Tukucho to South Ghasa, and blessed with majestic views of Nilgiri and Dhaulagiri.

The lodge was built on what used to be a buckwheat field, using entirely locally sourced materials. Located in Kobang, the lodge offers close views of the mountains (just 10km from the summit of Dhaulagiri, the world's eighth highest mountain). The rooftop provides the best vantage point for photography enthusiasts to take pictures of the mountains and the vast Kali Gandaki River during sunrise and sunset.

www.lodgethasangvillage.com

★★★★



KENJI KWOK



KENJI KWOK

OM'S HOME

Om's Home in Jomsom is a cosy and comfortable place to stay for trekkers along the Annapurna route looking to appreciate the beauty of Mustang.

The reputed accommodation is an ideal place to sit back with a book or go explore the nearby villages through a list of itineraries designed by owner Tripple Gurung. And if you prefer to venture out on a bicycle the guest house has several mountain bikes up for rent.

The hotel is also home to the only Himalayan Java outlet in the area, so you don't have to miss out on a good cup of joe while in this trans-Himalayan oasis.

www.omshomejomsom.com

★★★★



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EVENTS



Rock, ride, run,

Invitations open for outdoor athletes to compete at the Himalayan Outdoor Festival.

21 March, Hattiban Hills, (01)6218484, hello@himalayanoutdoorfestival.com, www.himalayanoutdoorfestival.com

Yin Yoga,

A new moon meditation where the sound of a live violin will guide your spirit to dive into your deepest self.

20 March, 5.30pm to 7pm, Pranamaya Yoga Studio, Boudha, 9802045484, info@pranamaya-yoga.com, www.pranamaya-yoga.com

EU Film Fest,

The fourth edition of the EU Film Festival has a selection of films from 19 different European countries.

21 to 25 March, QFX-Kumari Hall, Kamal Pokhari, (01)4429445, delegation-nepal@eeas.europa.eu

Curating101,

A workshop on dealing with local art production in relation to contemporary global processes.

21 March, 9am to 12.30pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 9830608874, sanj33p@gmail.com

Holy mountains,

A lecture by Belgian author and mountaineer, Damien François, about the sacredness of the Himalayas.

23 March, 5.30pm, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, (01)4472807, info@soscbaha.org

Barista training,

Learn how to brew a perfect cup of coffee with Karma Coffee's unique hand brewing equipment in a three-day workshop.

Rs 1200 per session, 27 March, 17 and 24 April, 4pm to 6pm, Karma Coffee, Jhamsikhel, 9843767232, malika@karmacoffee.com.np

Momo mania,

The biggest momo party of the year. Rs 899 (adults), Rs 599 (under SLC), 21 March, 2pm to 9pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, (01)5544263, (01)5546696, events@anglo.com.np, www.thebakerycafe.com.np

Phantalassa,

An exhibition of sound, video, drawing and photography by Mexican artist, Alain Ledezma, in residence at Mcube. Till 21 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4218048, sthapa@mos.com.np

Trash-free Tundikhel,

An awareness campaign against littering in public. 21 March, 8am to 10am, Tundikhel, (01)4226471, info@cleanupnepal.org.np, www.cleanupnepal.org.np

Critical Mass,

Join a group of cyclists as they seek to reclaim the streets of Kathmandu on their monthly trip. 27 March, 5.30pm, Kathmandu Durbar Square, 980204586, info@cyclecity.org.np

Women's exhibition,

Nine Nepali artists come together for a group exhibition. Till 30 April, Newa Chen Art Gallery, Kulimha, Kobahal, Patan, (01)5533532, www.kalavoice.com

DINING



Capital Grill,

This American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes. Bhatbhateni, (01)4428426, grillcapital@gmail.com

Little Italy,

Turn vegetarian at this Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special chocolate bomb. Darbar Marg, (01)4233577, food.junction@shtcnepal.com

Phat Kath,

Offers French-ish food, takeaway crepes, hookahs, and a formidable hip hop soundtrack for everyone. Thamel, 9803314268



Chopstix,

Savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion is sure to charm and impress. Try the famous drums of heaven. Kumaripati, (01)5551118



Radisson Special,

Starting this month The Terrace Garden at Radisson is hosting barbecue evenings every Friday and Saturday. Visit to enjoy a variety of chicken, beef, fish, lamb and sausages, grilled to perfection. Rs 1200 (excluding taxes) per person, Friday and Saturday, 6pm to 10pm, The Terrace Garden, Radisson Hotel, Lajimpat.



The Corner Bar recently introduced its new menu that combines the best of local and international tastes. Golden fried prawn, Kurkure Machha Tareko, breaded stuffed mushrooms, falafel pita bread, honey chili potatoes, anyone? Live music (Wednesday to Saturday), 4pm to 10.30pm (happy hours till 7pm), The Corner Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lajimpat.

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MUSIC



Underside live,

The metal band celebrates 'Satan's Night in Hell'.
Rs 400 (pre-sale only),
28 March, 6pm,
Club 25 Hours, Tungal,
9843664132

Cancer night,

A special concert with Kutumba, Rohit John Chettri and Ashesh Rai to raise funds for children battling cancer.

Rs 2000, 20 March, 6pm, Moods Lounge,
Blue Bird Mall, Tripureswor, 9813353423,
9841467697, rosefoundationnepal@gmail.com

Combos concert,

KJC's faculty, with Nepali guest musicians and students of the Nepal Jazz Workshop come together for a live concert.

Rs 3000, 20 March, 7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel,
(01)5013554, sunita@katjazz.com.np,
www.katjazz.com.np



The Immigrants live,

From Argentine and Finnish tango to rare and evolving klezmer, this European trio promises a night of global sound.

20 March, 7.30pm, Places Restaurant and Bar,
Thamel, (01)4700413, sanjukun7@gmail.com



March of Pigs,

Progressive rock metal band, Kamero pre-launch their debut album *The Absence Paradox* with friends, Tumbleweed Inc, Vomiting Snake, Social Nerve and Horny Monks.

28 March, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel,
9803719781

Sundance,

An electronic dance music event with DJs from Nepal and Dubai.

4 April, 1pm onwards, 1905, Kantipath, 9803298511

Marina Xavier Live,

Don't miss the charming Singaporean singer as she performs for the first time in Kathmandu.

Rs 250, 20 March, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel,
9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com

GETAWAYS



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Nuwakot, (01)4700426, info@rural-heritage.com

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Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center,
Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha (01)4375280,
980106661, peace@wellness.com.np



Haatiban Resort,

Climb up to Chandragiri in the morning for a royal view of Kathmandu Valley and jog down to the hotel for a relaxed evening.

Pharping, Kathmandu, (01)4371537/56



Temple Tree Resort and Spa,

A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you go in.

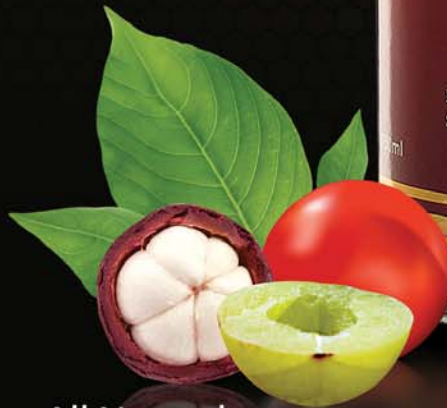
Gaurighat, Lakeside, (061)465819



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The Tale of the Princess Kaguya

I have always loved Studio Ghibli's productions, referring to them often in my reviews, especially when talking about animation that is not a product of this blessed dream factory. While Hayao Miyazaki, the founder and



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

acknowledged master of Ghibli did not direct *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (2013) which is co-written and directed by Isao Takahata, it is nevertheless one of the most charming and uplifting films to come out of the famed animation studio.

The film is based on a Japanese

folk tale about a bamboo cutter who comes across a magical shoot that opens to reveal a tiny, delicate, sleeping princess.

Convinced that she is an offering from heaven, the bamboo cutter takes her in his palms and brings the princess home, where she metamorphoses into a wailing, chubby baby girl in the arms of the shocked but simultaneously delighted wife of the bamboo cutter. The happy couple raise her as she grows rapidly, which earns her the nickname of "Little Bamboo" even while the bamboo cutter and his wife continue to call her "Princess"; though she calls them "Mother" and "Father" with utter sincerity seemingly unaware of her magical origins.

It is only when the bamboo cutter begins to discover caches of gold and rich silks for kimonos

in the bamboo groves he frequents for work that he begins to glimmer with the idea of taking his beautiful "Princess" into the capital city so that she may finally get her due.

I will not reveal too much of the plot - which runs along the classical lines of a charming fable, moonlight and all, but I will say that *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* is not as bland as it sounds in my meagre synopsis. The strengths, a staple with Studio Ghibli, lies in the humour, both gentle and raucous, as well as the extraordinary detail with which characters are captured, rendered, and developed.

The moments of "Little Bamboo" growing up in the countryside with her hooligan sidekicks (all chubby little boys scrambling around her long legs, aside of course from Sutemaru, the handsome one) are utterly captivating, recording childhood in all its glory with skinned knees, fruit stealing, squabbling, and gluttony.

The transition from the country to the city is a bit of abrupt, but is compensated by the entrance of some rather hilarious characters, though the first half of the film is stronger due to the pastoral setting.

I watched the film in its subtitled version so I missed a few plot points towards the end, particularly to do with Japanese folklore, but this in no way detracted from my delight with this film which is set to become another Studio Ghibli classic. 🇯🇵

nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer



HAPPENINGS



NEPALARMY

AND EATING IT, TOO: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala cuts a cake at the 14th anniversary celebration of the National Security Council at Kathmandu on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANTHA

NEWLY APPOINTED: Brazil's ambassador to Nepal, Maria Teresa Mesquita Pessoa, presents her credentials to President Ram Baran Yadav at Shital Niwas on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

HEADS UP: Nepali forward Bimal Gharti Magar tries to tackle the ball with a header during the second leg match of the 2018 FIFA World Cup pre-qualifier against India at Dasrath Stadium on Tuesday.

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CLIMBING TO THE DIVINE

Cynics would say that mountain climbing is just a reckless attempt to gain fame and glory by challenging one's physical capabilities. Yet this activity, famous in Nepal's Himalaya, seems to have a mystical, spiritual dimension.

Belgian climber Damien François tries to explain this fascination in his book, *Holy Mountains of Nepal*.

The idea of the book came after a series of photographs François had taken during several expeditions in the Himalaya were published in the French journal, *Religions et Histoire* in 2013. After a lecture tour about his expeditions, he decided to write a book summing up the information he had collected in Nepal.

François himself experienced the spiritual call of the mountains ten years ago. In 2005, he abandoned his first Himalayan expedition after a bout of mountain sickness. But as he was climbing down Mt Everest, he already knew he would prepare for a second attempt the next year.



"I felt there was something great waiting for me in these mountains," he told *Nepali Times*.

Aside from the spiritual call of the mountains, François recalls the strong religious associations with the Himalaya -

Mt Kailash, for example, is sacred for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Bönpo. To illustrate the universal sacredness of mountains, he compares the Himalayas to the mountains of North America that are worshiped by many Amerindians communities.

The author is critical of the reductionist

ego-centric western notion of climbing. "I wanted to compare indigenous approaches and those of foreign visitors," he explains. "Holiness has been traded for hard currency."


This book is a sort of tribute to raw nature for François who says he has learned more in the wild than in many years of studying. "To me, being in the mountains is more about the sublime, the immanence - which can lead to the divine," he says.

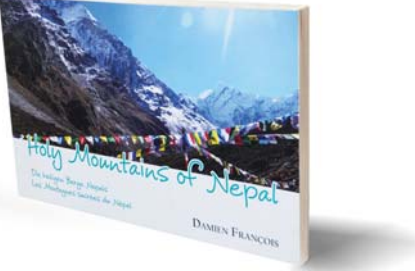
Comparing it to his three previous books, François says *Holy Mountains of Nepal* was a more personal project. In fact, the slim

volume sometimes looks like a travelogue rather than a treatise on the metaphysical aspects of mountains.

Damien François isn't a technical photographer, but says he has a good eye. The majestic landscapes he shot surely help to give some spectacular pictures although the quality is not uniform.

The writing is accessible to anyone who would like to know about the subject. Still we feel François had enough material to go deeper - maybe a lack of space because the book is written in three different languages (English, French and German)?

We can expect more anecdotes related to the sacredness of Nepal's mountains in François's next book to be published in the spring of 2015 which will deal with the Everest avalanche of April 2014.  *Stéphane Huët*



Damien François will deliver a lecture on holy mountains on 23 March, 5.30 pm at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.
Holy Mountains of Nepal
90 pages
Vajra Books, 2014
Rs 550



Opened a couple of years ago, Maan Nam was just another Korean restaurant in town but now under the management of a new team, it has evolved to become a multi-cuisine restaurant that also houses an indoor golf driving range with state-of-the-art golf simulation. But that is not all there is to this establishment, the dining room walls are adorned with old photos of Kathmandu's bygone days to keep history buffs engrossed for hours; there is a little handicrafts outlet that showcases some of the finest craftsmanship being created by local artisans; and the restaurant hosts a farmer's market every Saturday.

Maan Nam means respect in Sanskrit and meeting in Korean and that is the ethos that the owners aim to bring — a place for meetings of all kinds. This means that in addition



PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

to a regular 'restaurant' type eating space, they have a well-stocked lounge bar, an area for salsa dancing on Tuesdays live musical performances on Fridays, and a spacious, well-equipped conference room. Their driving range, Nepal Golf Zone, is extremely popular with people of all ages.

The golf theme is present even in the names of their cocktails — a Hole in One, a Birdie, or a Bunker Junker, anyone?

The food served at Maan Nam is still largely Korean, so we dived straight into our waiter's recommendation - Mandu (Rs 395) or Korean momos. A plate of rather large steamed dumplings filled with a generous portion of very lightly flavoured chicken mince served with a piquant Korean sauce. It was filling and very tasty. They need to be eaten piping hot though for as they cool, the dumpling tends to become slightly tough


Maan Nam



OPEN FROM
10AM
TO
12AM

and bundle them in lettuce pouches, add some of the charred veggies and sit back and revel in the explosion of flavours in your mouth. And as with all Korean food, the wide variety of accompanying side dishes make this a truly wonderful meal.

Their other bestseller is the Trekker's Diet (Rs 1300) which is an entire chicken especially prepared to provide nourishment to exhausted travelers. Their secret ingredient? Himalayan Ginseng. Well, since I wasn't hungry enough to polish off an entire chicken by myself and hadn't returned from an arduous trek either, this dish will have to wait.

But I will go back and go back often, even if it is just for a nice cuppa coffee in their lush garden or to try out my golfing skills.  *Ruby Tuesday*

How to get there: Maan Nam is right across the road from the entrance to Naxal Bhatbhateni's parking lot in a lane called Padma Marg.
www.nepalgolfzone.com



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Accepting yourself

Hi,
I find it sad that sometimes families prioritise society's judgement over their children's happiness. When we love someone, we should accept



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING

Anjana Rajbhandary

them for who they are-not what they 'should' become. For more questions email me: askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or @AnjyRajy.

■ I am a 26-year-old girl born and raised in Kathmandu. I have a great family and a good job, but I'm struggling to come to terms with my sexuality. I knew I was 'different' from a young age but accepted who I was in college when I fell in love with another girl. I am leading a double life and have not told my family, and it is taking a toll on my soul. My family wants me to get married but I don't know how to come clean to them without hurting their feelings. Should I just move out of Nepal and come back when the country becomes more tolerant and understanding of LGBT issues? - NN

AR- I am not sure what the 'correct' way to respond to your question is but I have friends who have been and are in the same boat as you. I would definitely say that having social support in this situation is critical, it may be a partner, friend or cousin. It would also be helpful for you to be in touch with some professionals who have worked in LGBT issues, if you are interested I can get you their contact information.

As for telling your family: there is no one good answer. You have to think of either consequences (you will be accepted or you will not) and be ready to deal with the aftermath.

Make sure to have social support when you are ready to tell your family.

The cultural aspect of being pressured to get married cannot be ignored, because your decision to tell them might leave you 'homeless' temporarily so being independent is key. Some family members may try to 'change' who you are but marriage is serious, and you probably would not want to involve another innocent person and his family into this.

I believe that even though your parents might not accept you now, eventually they will understand you. The most

important thing for a parent is to see their children happy, this is tricky, but your parents love you for who you are and not your sexual orientation. You do have to realise that your parents may not realise it now.

It is hard to defy norms, but I believe it is most important to be true to who you are and accept yourself for the person you have become. Be strong, think about yourself and what you want in life, seek personal and professional support. With time, you will make the right decision. You have one life, make it a happy one.

Good luck.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

GOOGLING EVEREST

Professional mountaineers and trekking enthusiasts from all over the globe have been flocking to the Himalaya for years, but now for the first time people can experience the Everest Base Camp Trek from the comfort of their homes.

Google's Street View has introduced a virtual tour of the Everest region, allowing viewers to navigate through rugged terrain around the world's highest mountain.

In collaboration with Kathmandu-based start-up Story Cycle and 21-time Everest summiteer Apa Sherpa, a Google team of backpackers and photographers trekked 100 horizontal and 2.5 vertical km from Lukla to Everest Base Camp and captured more than 45,000 panoramic images along the way. The team used two single-lens tripod cameras and a 15-lens custom-built 'Trekker' unit.



Apart from the usual popular sites from Lukla to Everest Base Camp, the Street View captured images from Apa Sherpa's hometown of Thame and high altitude communities at the base of Mt Everest such as Phortse, Dingboche and Lobuche.

Scrolling through a slideshow of 360-degree views of various areas, visitors to the site get the chance to experience the Everest region from the trekkers' point of view, minus the strenuous walk. Of course, nothing can beat the real thing,

but the site can be an excellent primer for those who are planning the trek.

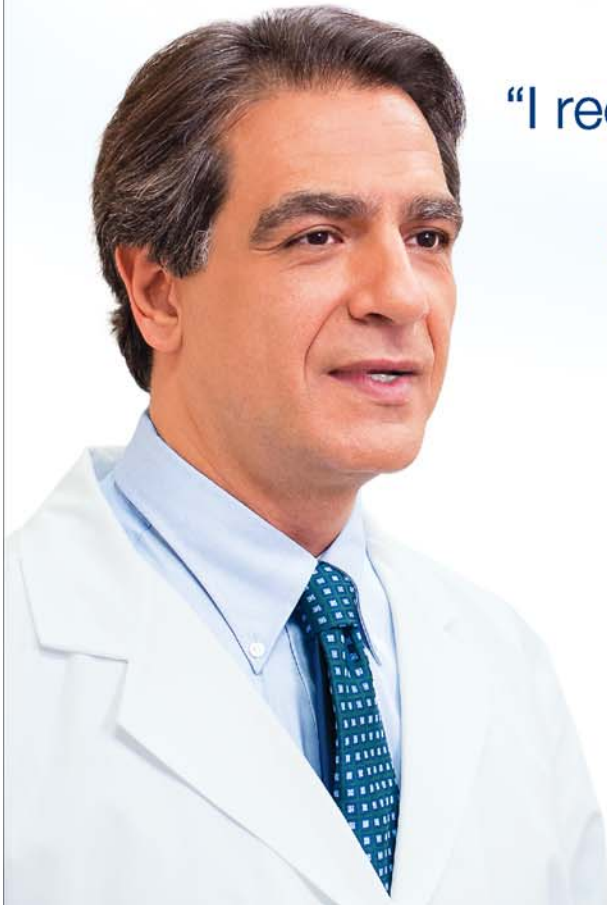
Not only do these high definition panoramas stir wanderlust amongst us who have rarely visited the Himalaya, but they also educate us about the difficulties faced by the communities living in the region. The aftermath of last year's avalanche on Everest, which killed 16 Nepali high altitude workers, is one of many tragedies that have highlighted the region's precarious dependence on adventure tourism.

While the Google team has done a magnificent job in documenting the Everest region, there were a few inaccuracies. In the Google Street View of the Hillary Step, the GPS lag still places it on the South Face of Everest instead of the SE Ridge. Such issues are mostly present in street views which appear narrower and aren't evident in panoramas of the mountains.

Google's Street View of the Everest Trek is probably the best thing that happened to Nepal's adventure tourism brand since the Imax film in 1997. The site is an experience in itself, and much more immersive than photographs in a guidebook. Rather than replacing real trekkers with virtual trekkers, it will probably bolster the popularity of Nepal's most famous destination. 🇳🇵


Yantrick's Verdict: Nothing can beat the real thing, but Google' Street View of the Everest region can be an excellent primer for those who are planning the trek.

 nepalitimes.com
■ Climb to Everest Base Camp 




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Justice in transition

The recent decision by the Supreme Court that the existing Truth and Reconciliation Bill did not meet international standards for human rights and justice has sent shock waves through the establishment.



LEGALESE
Binita Dahal

The two former warring sides are now part of the state, and they are on the same side when it comes to evading being answerable to wartime crimes. Predictably, the UCPN(M) and the CPN-M are the least happy with the verdict of the apex court. In fact, the latest collapse of the negotiations over the constitution and the announcement of a series of strikes next month by the Maoist-led opposition alliance is an attempt to show this displeasure.

They argue that wartime excesses should be under the jurisdiction of a future TRC, and asked for a repeal of the verdict. They and the other parties want the TRC to just be a dispenser of amnesties and pardons.



BIKRAM RAI



The Maoists react badly to the Supreme Court verdict rejecting amnesty provisions in the TRC Act

When the members of the newly formed TRC went to meet the UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, he directly rejected any move to resolve conflict-era cases through the TRC for which he only wants a limited mandate.

According to the Supreme Court verdict, the TRC cannot investigate already pending cases in the courts and it cannot ask the government to withdraw cases and recommend for amnesty as well.

“We were confused initially about the parallel jurisdiction of the court and TRC but now it is clear that the already pending cases can only be solved by a court, not the Commission,” TRC Chair Surya Kiran Gurung

told me last week.

The Supreme Court has struck down provisions in the TRC Act that gave the Commission the right to recommend amnesty to cases of serious human rights violations, and declared that no amnesty can be given without the consent of victims.

The latest verdict has cleared three points:

The TRC has no right to see and investigate the cases which are already pending in the court system.

Conflict era cases will be investigated by the TRC, but if it decides that the case must be filed in the courts then it will recommend this directly to the Attorney General and not through

the Ministry of Law as cited in the Act. The Supreme Court has thus taken out the involvement of the government.

Victims consent is required for both reconciliation and amnesty. One of the main dissatisfaction among victims was the provision in the Act which gave the TRC the authority to grant amnesty. The SC verdict has ruled out the TRC’s role in general amnesty.

Even if the Maoists urge the ruling parties to review the court’s verdict it is not easy for them to file a review petition. Previous SC verdicts have also ruled out political interference in the transitional justice mechanism. There are

approximately 1,000 criminal cases from the conflict period pending in the court system and the District Police Office.

Advocate Raman Kumar Shrestha says the verdict will impact on the constitution drafting process since it will open all cases which are currently closed due to the absence of a TRC. As PM, Baburam Bhattarai made history in 2012 by withdrawing nearly 200 cases involving 1,700 people, according to the Ministry of Law. Now, all these cases can be re-opened, and that is why the Maoists are against the verdict.

Another fallout of the SC verdict is that it has brought the two factions of the Maoists closer together, with talks of reunification opening despite their serious differences. This is so that they can pool their combined strength to oppose the Supreme Court verdict. This opens up the question about what the real reasons were behind the split in the Maoists if they have a common stance on war crimes. Maoists of all factions and some sections of the ruling NC-UML combine would like to see all conflict-era cases to be resolved through a political understanding and not through the judiciary.

It is rare for the Supreme Court to review a verdict of the special bench, even when the government agrees to file a review petition. This means the Maoists will try to put pressure on the government by obstructing talks on the constitution and through street protests to try to overturn the verdict. @binitadahal



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PIPED WATER STILL A PIPE DREAM

Fifteen years behind schedule, the Melamchi Project to supply water to Kathmandu Valley is likely to be further delayed

KENJI KWOK

When the Italian firm Cooperativa Muratori Cementisti (CMC) Di Ravenna signed an agreement with Melamchi Water Supply Development Board (MWSDB) nearly two years ago, there was a glimmer of hope that the Melamchi Project could finally bring water to the parched capital by September next year.

But less than half the 27km tunnel (*pic, top*) to bring glacial melt from the Langtang National Park to Kathmandu is finished, and there doesn't seem to be any sense of urgency in expediting the work. The people of Kathmandu Valley may have to settle for yet another familiar delay of a project

that is already behind by 15 years.

The \$317.3 million project is being supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), JICA and the OPEC Fund. ADB president Takehiko Nakao told us during a visit to Nepal last month that Melamchi was a priority project for both the ADB and the Nepal government, and that he was confident the project would be completed by September 2016.

But the average daily excavation progress was only 25m/day in January, even though CMC says it can increase that to 30m/day from March. This still falls short of the target of 34m/day if the project is to meet its deadline.

MWSDB Executive Director Ghanashyam Bhattarai admitted that the project is behind schedule, but says no action

against the Italian contractor is contemplated unless it misses the deadline. Although local obstruction and political interference in the past delayed the project, Bhattarai says that is not the case anymore.

Water expert Dipak Gyawali of the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation said studies have shown that 70 per cent of the

water in the mains is presently lost due to leakage from ageing pipes or pilferage. He added that the problem is not so much the scarcity of water, but bad water management and wasteful distribution.

"Assuming that water from Melamchi finally comes, who is going to distribute it? There are no maps, people don't even

know where the pipes are," said Gyawali, a former Minister of Water Resources. The Kathmandu Valley Water Limited (KUKL) is digging up the roads revamping the mains, but pricing and distribution of piped water may still be a pipe dream.

Kathmandu Valley's 2.5 million people are preparing for another dry season, and try to



UZABI BAIDAR

By most international standards Kathmandu should be considered uninhabitable because the city of 2.5 million has few functioning water mains. But one of the reasons the city hasn't been abandoned is that its 400-year-old Malla-era water mains are still functioning.

Kathmandu residents have learnt to improvise: they pump ground water, buy water from tankers or increasingly, collect rainwater. But the mainstay of water supply for inner city Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur are still the heritage taps built by the Malla kings.

Even though many of these historic water taps have gone dry because of the destruction of feeder channels, they are still the mainstay for water supply in most inner city neighbourhoods. As the dry season begins, it is a common sight to see long lines of jars waiting to be filled from the trickle that still comes out of these ingenious systems.



UZABI BAIDAR

Of the nearly 60 neighbourhood water spouts in Patan, many have gone dry due to encroachment of ponds that used to recharge the aquifers, or the foundations of new houses destroying the network of underground canals that brought water to the spouts.



KENJI KWOK

"Source degradation is the main problem in restoring the ancient water systems in Patan," said Rohit Ranjitkar of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Locals say the restored stone spouts still suffer water-logging and garbage problems.

Going with the flow



KENJI KWOK

make do the best they can with water from ancient water spouts and wells, and buying expensive water from tankers. Traditional stone spouts, which have served the needs of the people of Nepal for centuries, are under pressure from heavy demand, lack of maintenance and the destruction of aquifers. (See story, below)

Santa Man Maharjan, 48, of

the Jyapu Samaj in Patan said: "Over the years, a lot of people have moved to settle down in Kathmandu Valley, buy land and drill wells everywhere, so the water table has fallen and there isn't enough water."

Guesthouses buy water from private water suppliers, where prices have gone up due to higher demand. For locals who can't

afford to buy water regularly, there is no other choice but to harvest rainwater, or wait hours for their turn to fill jars at traditional water spouts.

Says Maharjan, who also owns Lalit Heritage Home guesthouse: "Melamchi is the only hope, but we have been hearing about Melamchi water for 20 years now. It's just a dream." 🇳🇵

There is also an effort to revive the 11.2 km royal water main constructed by Malla kings 300 years ago from Tika Bhairab to Patan Darbar. The 1.5m wide canal used to provide irrigation water along the way, and fed a network of underground aqueducts that fed water spouts.

The recent restoration of the Nagahiti water spout at Nagbahal in Patan (pic, left) is proof that with determination and teamwork it is possible to bring back the lost glory of the Valley's hydraulic civilisation, while at the same time augment its modern urban water supply system.

Nagahiti used to be often dry, and when water did flow it was contaminated. Then, 12 years ago the local group Alliance for Eco-tourism in collaboration with American Ambassador Fund for Cultural Preservation got to work to restore the system.

"We started with first trying to document where the inlet and outlets were, map the canals and find ways to clean them," explained Jharana Joshi of the Alliance for Eco-tourism.

She said the main challenge was mapping the underground canals feeding the stone spout, many of which are located below residential buildings.

Pipes were pushed into the spout up to 500m and dye released in the ponds to try to identify the sources of the water. The aquifer feeding the Nagahiti was thus traced to the Swangchiba pond on the town's outskirts.

After the source was detected, the actual restoration and cleaning of the canal began. Today, there is plentiful clean water flowing out of the spout, even in the dry season.

While current demand for water in Kathmandu is 230 million litres per day, the water pipes laid down during the Rana period from Sundari Jal and Pharping supply only 50 million litres, and the system is so leaky that an estimated 75 million litres a day is lost.

Says Joshi: "The restoration of Nagahiti provides an important lesson for the revival of other water spouts in the Valley. It proved that you have to understand and identify the ancient engineering systems that made them possible." 🇳🇵

 **nepalitimes.com**

■ Reviving Patan's royal canals, #273
■ Private water for the public, #620

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Fake doctor out on bail

Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal, 19 March

Almost six months after the Kathmandu District Court ordered the arrest of Yeshe Lodoe Lama in connection to the financial irregularities and mismanagement of funds at the Citta Hospital in Humla, the Supreme Court released him on a Rs 1 million bail on 4 March.

The decision was made by a joint bench led by Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah himself and Justice Jagdish Sharma Poudel. Lama, whose medical certificate was found to be fake (*seen, right, examining a patient*) was in judicial custody since September 2014 after the Kathmandu CDO found him guilty of embezzlement of charity funds, and that documents he had submitted about the hospital were fraudulent. Lama went to the Supreme Court after Patan Appellate Court on 31 October upheld Kathmandu District Court's decision to keep him in judicial custody.

In February 2013, artist Michael Daube, executive director of Citta USA, which supported the hospital in Humla lodged a complaint against Lama at the district administration office in Kathmandu for misappropriation of funds. Although Lama submitted audit reports, Daube says they were neither timely nor transparent. The land for the sprawling complex that houses 15-bed hospital equipped with an operation theatre and special emergency wards was bought in his father, Tsering Lama's name.

The facilities at the Citta Hospital in Humla were

only used during the occasional medical camps and Lama was found selling donated medicines at steep prices to local patients. The hospital had an annual budget of almost \$90,000 until funding was stopped in late 2012 after Citta discovered that Lama was not even a real doctor.

Daube is disappointed about Yeshe Lama's release despite overwhelming evidence, but said he is not ready to give up someone who stole money meant for Nepal's most disadvantaged people. "Since Yeshe is out on bail, the case will apparently continue and be investigated further," Daube said in an email. "That is the good news, I guess. With respect to the law, we intend to do the necessary and again defend the case at district level."

Citta USA supported Lama to start Citta Medical Centre in 2004 for accessible and quality health care for people in one of the poorest districts of Nepal. After fraudulent documents about the hospital's financial records surfaced, Citta USA has been in a legal battle against Lama for the past

three years to get the hospital back. The hospital is currently closed, pending investigation.

Since the apex court granted Lama the bail, legal experts watching the case closely fear it could indicate the upcoming hearings at the lower district court handing out a lenient sentence to Lama.

Said Daube: "Seems like Yeshe Lodoe Lama is trying to buy time, my only hope is that the law will be followed properly and due diligence will be done to see he is put in jail and health care can finally flourish for that impoverished region."



Constituent Assembly Leaving Certificate

सेतोपाटी

Rajesh KC in *setopati.com*, 19 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“I am not well. Unless someone shoots me dead I, Oli, will not endorse the politics of federalism based on communalism ethnicity.”

CPN-UML Chair KP Oli in *Annapurna Post*, 19 March

Nepali in leukemia discovery

himalkhabar.com, 15 March

A Nepali PhD student Sewa Rijal is among a team of researchers from Monash University in Melbourne, which discovered a gene in leukemia patients that causes resistance to chemotherapy. The discovery of the INPP4B gene was based on Rijal's PhD thesis. Rijal did her A levels in Budhanilkantha School before moving to Australia for higher studies. *Himal Khabarpatrika* interviewed Rijal by email:



Himal Khabarpatrika: How did you feel when the leukemia gene was discovered?

Sewa Rijal: This finding was not something that was discovered overnight, it took five years of hard work from the entire research team at Monash. The feeling that you have contributed to knowledge in the field of cancer such as leukemia gives one a lot of satisfaction.

How does the discovery of the protein help the leukemia patients?

This protein can be a novel biomarker of the disease, guide treatment options and help avoid the unnecessary toxicity that comes with chemotherapy. Our current work is focused on understanding how this protein works to cause resistance to chemotherapy. If we understand this, we can target the protein and the pathway that it involves to cause pathogenesis, which can help treat acute myeloid leukemia more effectively.

Do you plan on coming back to Nepal?


I do plan to return to Nepal when I have enough experience to initiate cancer research in the country. I would like to establish a research center where we can have access to cancer tissue samples from hospitals around the valley and scientific equipment to carry out the research. I think this will require international collaboration with a university that is well-known for cancer research, such as Monash.

What are the major challenges you foresee?

It would have to be funding. Hopefully the government can contribute to medical research as in most developed countries. We can also get funding from international sources and charities.


Who do you attribute your success to?

My parents have always encouraged me to pursue higher education and I would like my story to be an inspiration to girls in Nepal to pursue higher education and lead the way.



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Suicides in the US

Umakanta Rimal in *BBC Nepali*, 17 March

BBC
नेपाली

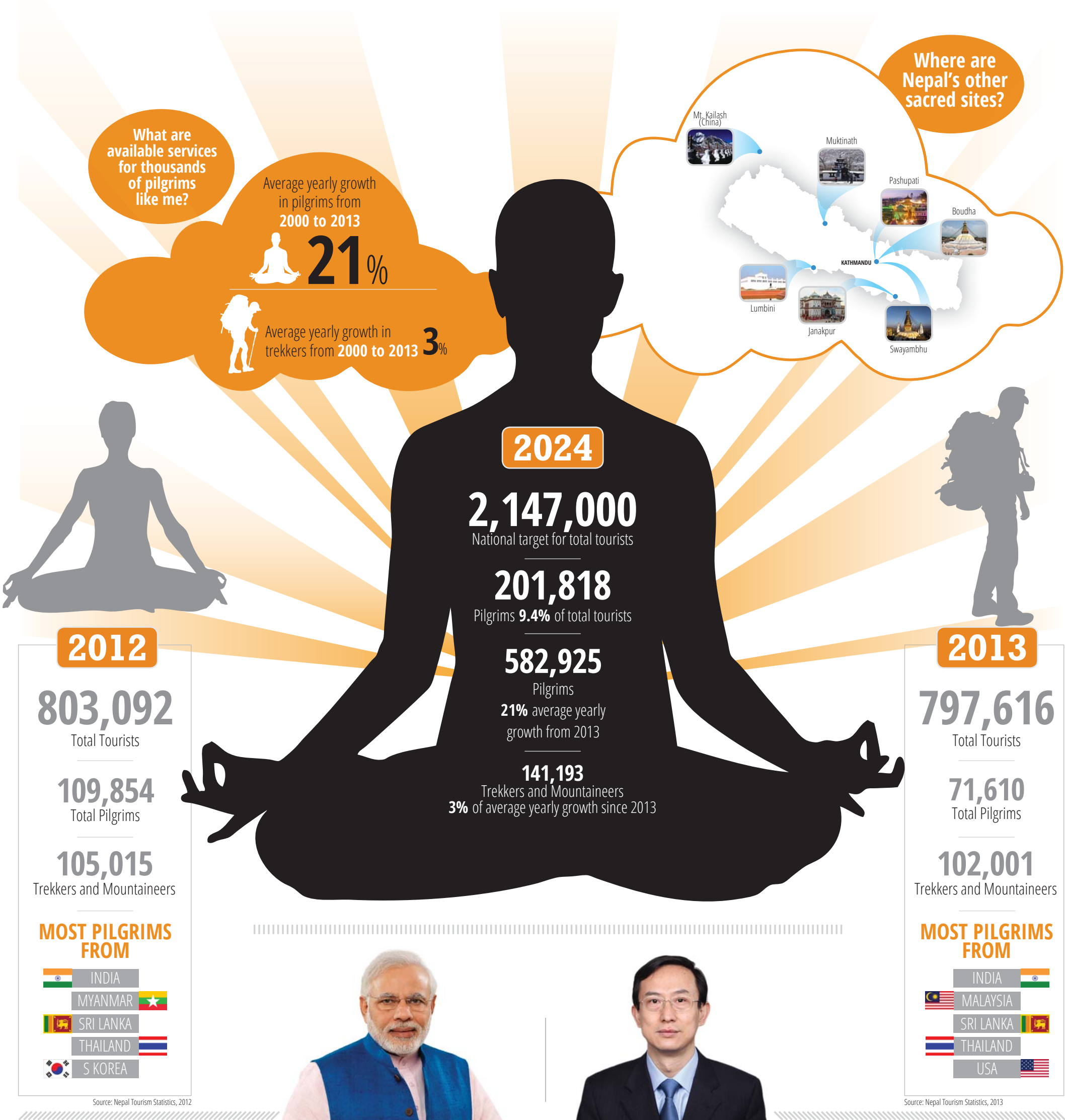
Madan Kandel and Bal Bahadur Khulal, were among the 81,000 refugees from Bhutan who were resettled in the United States under an international program, who committed suicide. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of Bhutanese refugees committing suicide is almost double compared to that of other communities. The average rate of suicide in the United States is 12 per 100,000, but the rate among Bhutanese is 27. Kandel had a wife and a 17-day-old child.

Bhutanese refugees say that individuals of all ages are committing suicide. Bidhyapati Mishra, a journalist who is resettled in North Carolina, says that loneliness, unemployment, language barrier and low economic status are the main reasons behind these unfortunate incidents.

Deepesh Das Shrestha of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says, "We are working with other agencies in the US to try to find a way to reduce the number of suicides." Bhutanese refugees in Nepal say that provided with a better living environment and proper counselling, the number can be brought down.

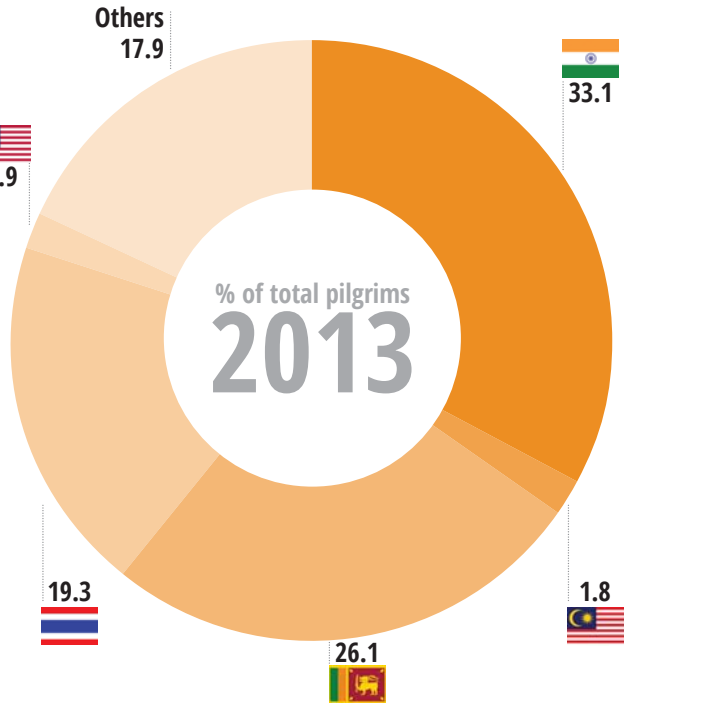
Can Nepal attract half a million pilgrims by 2024?

'Ne-pal' implies keepers (pala) of the abode of the gods (ne). Can we live up to the name to turn our country into the cradle of eastern spirituality?



Pilgrims: High volume Low spending?

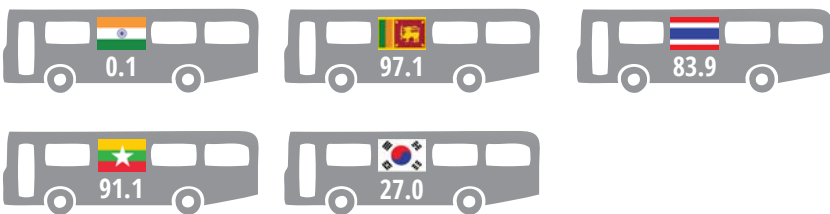
Many pilgrims from predominantly Buddhist countries enter Nepal by land. Pilgrims from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar accounted for almost 58% of all pilgrims in 2012; while more than 90% of tourists from those 3 countries entered Nepal via land. Tourists from these three countries were also among the shortest stayers in Nepal; they stayed for a combined average of less than 6 days. In comparison, almost all Indian tourists in 2012, including pilgrims, entered Nepal via air (All data doesn't seem accounted for). These Indian tourists also stayed for longer, an average of 9.34 days.



Average Length of Stay in days



% of Tourist Arrival by land (2012)



Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 2012, 2013

Where else after Lumbini or Pashupatinath?



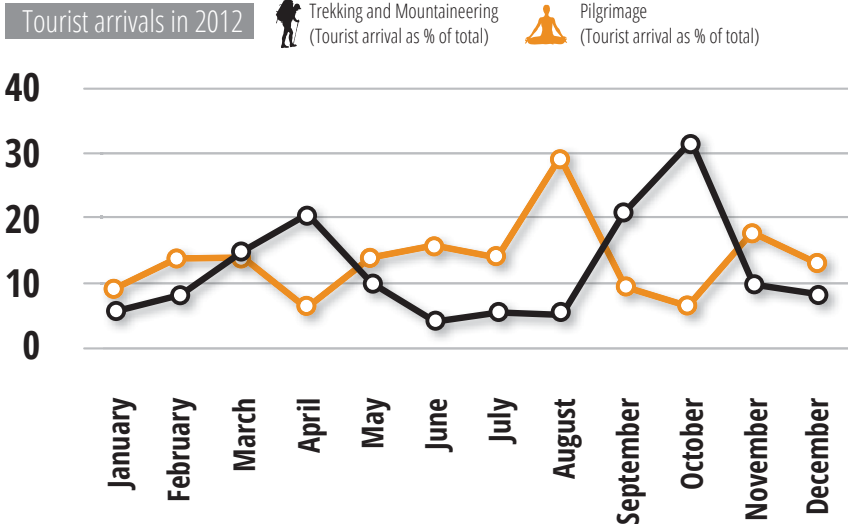
Spiritual travellers may visit Rinpoche learning centres such as the Asura Cave Temple in Pharping, the Kopan

Monastery in Kapan, Lawudo Gompa retreat center in Solu Khumbu, or the Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Boudanath.

Travellers may also consider visiting hidden jewels such as the Khaptad Ashram in Khaptad, Halesi Mahadev temple in Khotang, or Pathibhara Devi in Taplejung.

Spiritualism or trekking?

Pilgrims seem to come during the off-seasons for trekkers and mountaineers. Enough spiritual tourists may help smoothen the seasonality in the tourism industry. Yet, trekkers and mountaineers may also be interested in spirituality. More people (excluding Nepalis and Indians) visited Lumbini and Pashupatinath temple area than total pilgrims for 2012 and 2013 (look below).



The graph for 2013 has higher peaks for April, June and October

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 2012

	2012	2013
Total Pilgrims	109,854	71,610
Visitors to Pashupatinath (excluding Indians)	139,885	156,858
Visitors to Lumbini (excluding indians)	136,067	125,496
Visitors to Lumbini (excluding top 5 pilgrim countries)	32,163	56,771

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 2012, 2013

Yoga tourism for spiritual trekkers



Meditative experiences are very attractive to spiritual tourists. They may opt for relaxing experiences in Dhamma Pokhara's Vipassana center, the Nepal Vipassana Centre in Dharmashringa, or the Osho Tapoban. Some entrepreneurs have also begun to promote ideas of Yoga treks in Nepal. Tourists may trek to off-the-beat spiritual sites in packages that emphasize trekking as much as yoga.

Most visited sites globally by pilgrims per annum (Alliance for Religions and Conservation, 2011):

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------|
| 1 | Ayyappan Saranam, India (Hindu) – | 30 million |
| 2 | Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico (Christian) – | 20 million |
| 3 | Amritsar, India (Sikh) – | 13 million |
| 4 | Hindu Mela, India (Hindu) – | 10 million |
| 5 | Tirupati, India (Hindu) – | 10 million |
| 6 | Arba'een, Karbala, Iraq (Islam) – | 10 million |
| 7 | Lourdes (Christian) – | 8 million |
| 8 | Basilica of the National Shrine of our Lady of Aparecida, Brazil (Christian) – | 6.6 million |
| 9 | Western Wall in 2009 (Jewish) – | 8 million |
| 10 | Dwarka, India (Hindu) – | 5 million |

If we are to attract millions of Hindu and Buddhist tourists to Nepal we must remember what Burmese UN Secretary-General U Thant said about Lumbini in 1970. It is also applicable to other religious sites in Nepal:



“ May I express my sincere hope that (both) interested governments, individuals and private groups will make generous contributions in cash or kind to help in the implementation of what I consider to be a most worthy project.”

From speech at the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini in 1970

A piece of the global religious tourism pie

UNWTO estimates that 300-330 million tourists visit the world's key religious sites each year. Global numbers of Hindu pilgrims alone are massive Ayappan Saranam, Hindu Mela, Tirupati, and Dwarka in India together attract 55 million tourists annually.

While numbers for Buddhist pilgrims are not available, we do know there are about 488 million Buddhists worldwide. The five countries with the largest number of Buddhists are China, Thailand, Japan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Globally, Buddhists are older, with median age of 34, than the overall population, with median age 28 (PEW, Global Religious Landscape 2012).

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The Consensus Ruse

The Maoist definition of consensus: 'Do what we say or we'll start another war and wreck the country all over again'

The hot word in politics, as the constitution continues to never get written, is 'consensus'. It is mouthed by everyone from the PM to opposition leaders, and acted upon by no one. It's a word nobody can argue with, or explain, especially since it's attained an almost mythical status, inexplicably elusive and always just beyond reach. The country's fate hangs



MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

in the balance, teetering between utopia and apocalypse, and unless the bickering parties magically conjure something up, we're all doomed to seek consensus forever.

Perhaps another buffet lunch at a 5-star hotel will solve the deadlock that has defied countless gourmet feasts, but whether any of the various players actually believes in the concept is highly doubtful. Consensus requires compromise. Typically those who cry loudest for consensus are those least willing to compromise.

A recent article detailing a conversation with Maoist ideologue and ex-PM Baburam Bhattarai mentions 'consensus' a dozen times without ever explaining how to achieve it or the meaning of the word for him and his party. Maybe that is because it means nothing. This obsession is simply the latest stalling mechanism in a long line of ploys, including shoe throwing and chair smashing, used to block the constitution.

The very purpose of the Constitutional Assembly has degenerated from its original mission to something akin to the ethos of the ruling class -- do as little as possible while hanging on to your chair (when not smashing it). The constitutional process has been subverted so often it's obvious the only goal of this assembly, at least for the Maoist and Madhesi opposition, is self-perpetuation. Even when these parties held power under two PMs progress on the drafting was clumsily obstructed at every stage.

Perhaps if consensus is repeated often enough it will suddenly come true, like in the fairy tales. That dovetails nicely with Mao's famous quote that if you repeat a lie 1,000 times it becomes the truth. The Maoist party is desperately trying to position itself as the consensus seeking party, despite the fact they never sought such a thing in areas they controlled during the war or when forming national governments. In fact, dissent and differing opinions were systematically repressed and compromised, that key ingredient to consensus, was despised as a bourgeois weakness.

A history of Maoism and Consensus would be a strong contender for the title of the Shortest Book in the World. Mao Zedong's one shot at it, his 'Let 100 Flowers Bloom' campaign, encouraged the people to post

suggestions and criticism in public spaces. This brief period of liberalisation was followed by a harsh crackdown that jailed and executed thousands who dared to speak out. The Great Helmsman remarked at the time he had 'enticed the snakes out of their caves' to destroy them. Pol Pot of Cambodia developed a uniquely effective approach to reaching consensus by simply murdering millions who didn't agree.

Until our local Maoists were decimated in the election, it's worth noting, the word that is now their holy mantra never crossed their lips. As omniscient ideologues, they know better than class enemies and feudals that the only consensus ever sought from the people was in paying extortion money demanded by the party. Even now, the Maoist version of consensual politics has nothing to do with consulting CA members or the people and everything to do with a select



High Level Cabal of Brahmins conniving behind closed doors. It's clear their interpretation of their favourite word is 'agree with us and do what we say or we'll make your life intolerable, start another civil war and wreck the

country all over again.'

The mere suggestion of putting contentious issues to a vote has the Maoists threatening violence, exposing their disdain for democracy and the very consensus they keep whining about. This

repetition of the term like some mystical chant while doggedly refusing to compromise has The Hand suspecting a ruse.

What seems to escape those stalking the corridors of power is that the election itself gave a mandate to the parties that got the most votes to write the damn thing and move on. The fact that a party that received only 15 per cent of the popular vote continues to hold the entire country hostage is an insult to the democratic process. The voters already decided who they trust to complete the writing, and it isn't the Maoists.

OK, maybe trust isn't exactly the right word, but the real reason the Maoists won't allow the constitution to be completed has little to do with a lack of consensus. It is because elections will follow and nothing terrifies them more than facing humiliation again at the polls. 🇳🇵

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Facing-saving on FB



UPENDRA LAMICHANE

It's time Nepal's politicians got on Facebook like 4.5 million other fellow-citizens. At least it would make up for the fact that they can't face the people face-to-face. However, it may be a good thing they don't have a status because if they did their timelines would literally drive The Ass up its wall with posts like these:



Like . Comment. Share

- Makuney** What's with the personality cult, Comrade? 1 hr . Like 3
- K P Oily** My, my someone is a jealous cat 14 mins . Like
- Bidya Madam** Handsome lag6 ni 10 mins . Like
- PKD** Great party! Sorry to leave without eating, got urgent call. 8 mins . Like
- Vladimir Ilyich** Hey, how come you don't have my picture on your wall? 6 mins . Like
- Joe Stalin** Yeah, you don't have me either. 5 mins . Like

- BRB** Trying to be another Jang Bahadur, or what, **K P Oily**? 24 mins . Like
- Jang Bahadur** Ke vanxa yo BRB? 38 mins . Like
- JN** Missed being with you guyz. Looks like you had lots of fun. 39 mins . Likes 3
- Ranjit Rae** Why not picking up your fone? Let's do lunch. 45 mins . Like

Kiran Kaka posted on Twitter 1 hrs . Like

#IAF plane at #KTM to pull out Turkish jet is a violation of #Nepal's air space and sovereignty #BuddhaWasBornInNepal #MtEverestIsInNepal

Like . Comment. Share

- PKD** K6 kamred, milne hoina bhanya? 20 mins . Like
- Pasang** Down with Indian expansionism, let's dig tunnels again. 25 mins . Like
- Bigplop** Where are our anti-aircraft batteries when we need them? 45 mins . Like

Kiran Kaka and **PKD** are now friends.

SuKo shared **Name Bang**'s photo. 2 hrs .

Let's combine the 12-point, 9-point and 5-point agreements and do a 25-point agreement.



Like . Comment. Share

- Brave Lion** Kam Gaina? 13 mins . Like
- Lord Ram** La-La 66 20 mins . Like
- Manoj Gajurel** ROFL. Kati hasnu. 25 mins . Like
- PKD** Only if you promise I get to be Executive President 50 mins . PKD likes this comment
- Gyancha** Whoa...**Suko** can count 52 mins . Like

President Ram Baran Yadav shared a photo. 3 hrs .

OK, if you can't reach a consensus, let's have a football match and whoever wins gets to write the constitution.



Like . Comment. Share

PKD, JN, Lord Ram and 601 others like this

Name Bang Ani draw bho bhane prakriya ma jane hai ta? 20 mins . Likes 12

His Holiness Comrade Lyar Khyal shared **PKD**'s photo. 1 hrs .

Humbled and honoured to join the Cash Maoists #FeelingBlessed #respect



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The Ass

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