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GOPEN RAI

BACK IN A BOX

One in every five person in Qatar today is a Nepali. Nepalis are deported daily from Doha airport because they have been duped by recruiters. Every year more than 200 Nepalis come home in coffins from Qatar alone, like the one above on Wednesday.

Eighteen per cent of Nepal's population of 30 million works abroad. Half of them are seasonal migrants in India, but no one keeps any records of where they go, what jobs they do or how much money they send home. Which is why the national discourse on migrant workers is dominated by the estimated 2 million who are in the Gulf, Malaysia, Korea and Japan. They send home \$4 billion a year, and remittances now make up more than a third of the country's GDP. But at what cost to the country?

Belabouring the obvious

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Zero cost migration, really?

Nepal and Qatar agreed this week that overseas contract workers shouldn't have to pay fees to recruiters anymore. Where have we heard that before? There is little likelihood that the bilateral zero-cost agreement will ever be enforced because there is too much money to be made on the blood, sweat and tears of Nepali workers by the politically-connected manpower mafia in Kathmandu.

BY OM ASTHA RAI PAGE 4

QUACK



The Supreme Court has released on bail a fake doctor charged with embezzling millions meant to upgrade medical care in Humla.

BY BHRIKUTI RAI
Centre for Investigative Journalism

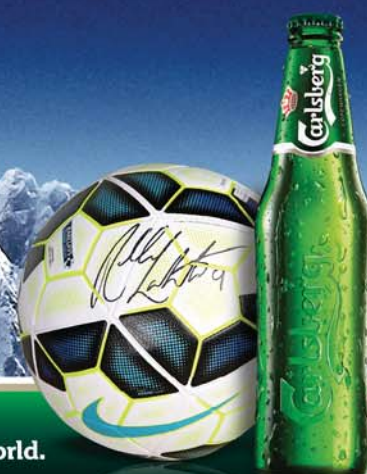
PAGE 16-17

YOUR AUTOGRAPH ON TOP OF THE WORLD

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BELABOURING THE

For a country that is so dependent on overseas contract workers, the Nepali state seems to be capable of neither protecting its citizens abroad nor maximising the benefits of remittances to the national economy. This is a disgraceful and outrageous lapse, but not surprising given the political disarray and absence of accountability among elected officials.

Eighteen per cent of Nepal’s population of 30 million at any given time is working abroad. Half of them are seasonal migrants in India, and no one keeps any records of where they go after crossing the open border, what jobs they have or how much money they send home. Which is why the national discourse on overseas labour is dominated by the estimated 2 million who are in the Gulf, Malaysia, Korea and Japan.

They send home more than \$4 billion a year, and remittances now make up a third of the country’s GDP. Without this safety valve, joblessness among youth would probably have led to even greater political chaos and instability than we have now.

Yet, the shabby way we treat the 2,500 Nepalis leaving for work and returning to Kathmandu airport every day is proof that the worst enemy of Nepali workers are Nepalis themselves. Instead of declaring them national heroes, they are fleeced, cheated, extorted, harassed, and abused by officials, security personnel every step of the way.

Which is why we welcome the zero-fee agreement signed this week between a visiting Qatari delegation led by Labour

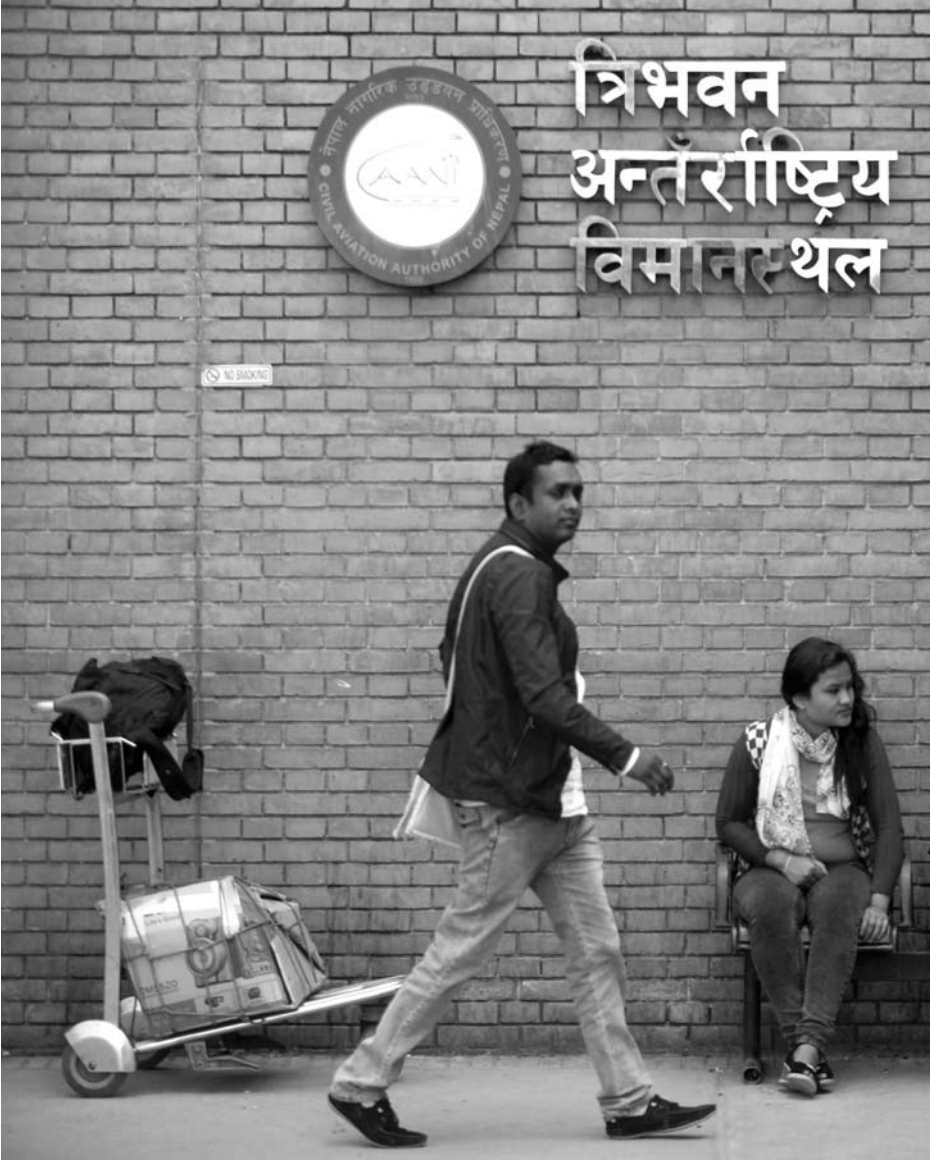
Minister Abdullah Bin Saleh Mubarak Al-Khulaifi and Nepal’s State Minister for Labour Tek Bahadur Gurung. As Om Astha Rai reports on page 4, this is not the first time such an agreement has been signed, so hope is that this agreement will be enforced strictly.

Four years ago, President Ram Baran Yadav and Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai visited Doha separately, and met Qatari officials. Both interacted with Nepali workers and heard firsthand that the real problem was exploitation by fellow Nepali recruiters back home. The statistics are revealing: one in every five persons in Qatar

today is a Nepali, and Nepalis are deported from Doha airport every day because they have been duped with fake papers. Every year more than 200 Nepalis come home in coffins from Doha alone, half of them have succumbed to Sudden Death Syndrome, but their families do not get compensation because they did not die at the ‘work site’.

After joining their jobs, most have to work many months just paying back recruiter’s commission fees. When they do

We doubt the zero-cost agreement between Qatar and Nepal this week will come into force because there is too much money to be made on the blood, sweat and tears of Nepali workers by the politically-connected manpower mafia.



YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

LOST DECADE

The only positive side to this transitional period is that it has succeeded in ruthlessly undressing the evils of political class (‘Another lost decade’, Editorial, #752). It would be meaningless to end it without working out a formula to eliminate the other problems with our rulers down to the last detail.

Nirmal Ghimire

■ As long as Nepal is under the tight grip of these scumbags, the country will not see light at the end of the tunnel.

Braveheart

■ I believe Kathmandu was mostly immune to widespread Maoist killings hence not much of a collective memory here (‘Harder to forgive than forget’, Qianyi Qin, #752). But go to Rolpa, Rukum or any other Maoist stronghold and you will find that the people haven’t had closure yet.

Namah

■ Someone please remind Dahal & Co that using terror to enforce strikes, extort money from citizens and protect criminals are not supported in a democracy. (‘If you can’t silence them, label them’, Damakant Jayshi, #752).

Paras

KATHMANDU THEN

Unbelievable yet recoverable (‘Kathmandu Valley then’, #752). Bagmati can be restored to its old glory with scientific and thoughtful planning even today.

Ananta R Baidya

■ I remember those monsoon days when the Bagmati used to flood from bank to bank but the last I saw it happen was in 1985. I want to cry when I see photos like these and feel fortunate to have experienced the Kathmandu Valley in all its glory. We need to make more exhibitions so young Nepalis know what this Valley used to be like so they can have a vision for the future.

James Giambrone

■ Bagmati watershed restoration should be a priority now. Picking garbage along the banks will not bring back the life of Bagmati.

Shambhu Malla

■ What have we done to ourselves and how did we get from there to here?

Tashi Sherpa

■ Thank you for the photographs. What blew me away was the amount of water seen in the Bagmati, and how clean the river looks. It’s now a pigsty. If the government and citizens have any sense of responsibility and willingness

to act together, the river (and the beauty of Kathmandu) can be brought back, albeit slowly.

A Nepali

■ How we have fouled up our nest. Alas

Govinda

DEMENTIA

Thanks for your sensible and revealing issue-based reporting (‘Remembering dementia’, Kenji Kwok, #752). Seriously refreshing to see media lead the change.

Sheren Shrestha

PRIVILEGED FREEDOM

Glad to read an article where there the writer doesn’t justify giving up on freedom and self-respect in the name of tradition, culture and love (‘Privileged freedom’, Anjana Rajbhandary, #751). I hope more and more women stay true to themselves and indifferent to society’s expectations, relatives’ reservations, and strangers’ comments. Nothing is worth more than the self-esteem and contentment that all of us, hardworking individuals truly deserve.

Ajee

ON CHEATING

■ It’s a compulsion not a choice. Source: my own experience. (‘Cheating is a choice, not a mistake’, Anjana Rajbhandary, #752).

Kap

■ A compulsion by definition is just a very strong desire to do something. This still leaves cheating as a choice, not something you can’t control. Those who say they can’t control it are using that ‘lack of a choice’ as a way out of their commitment, an excuse. If someone honestly feels that way, they should be open with their partner and have an open relationship so both partners know. Honesty is vital to any relationship.

Rachel

ASS

I wanted to post this note on Twitter, but chickened out and will instead hide under the anonymity of the Internet’s and say it here: I, a 20-something Nepali, am henceforth giving up on this country (‘It’s a riot out there’, Ass, #752). I’m done. Checking out. Bye, bye. If some of you are still around until 2075 AD let me know how y’all are holding up and do post a PDF of the new constitution on the interwebs.

ZXY

■ Do you think you could come up with your own version of Jon Stewart-esque The Weekly Ass Show? Or you can get someone funny to read/act on your weekly Backside Blog?

Citizen Galore

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THIS WEEK



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Weekly Internet Poll #753

Q. Will the 11-point agreement signed between the government and Dr Govinda KC be implemented?

Total votes: 81

■ Yes 14.81%%

■ No 67.9%

■ Don't know/ can't say 17.28%

Weekly Internet Poll #754
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the ban on the use of plastic bags be implemented?



OBVIOUS

TRIBHUVAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



GOPEN RAI

get their salaries, they are paid much less than what is stipulated in the contract. The Kafala system bonds Nepalis to their Qatari employers and puts them at their mercy.

The agreement this week seems to have been prompted not so much by political will in Kathmandu, but the international criticism that Qatar is facing ahead of the 2020 Football World Cup about the treatment of overseas workers there.

The zero-cost rule is not new. Qatar and Nepal signed a similar agreement in 2005 under which Nepali migrant workers don't have to bear the cost of air tickets, visa fees and other charges. But everyone was making so much money on the blood, sweat and tears of migrant workers that the agreement was never implemented.

Qatari employers are required to pay a facilitation fee of \$260 per worker, which the recruiting agency in Doha and its counterpart in Kathmandu divide up between them. Despite this, Nepali manpower companies charge the worker Rs 100,000 just for finding them a job. On top of this, although the 2005 bilateral agreement stipulates that the Qatari employer is supposed to foot the air ticket and visa fees, Nepali recruiters still ask the workers to pay for this. Now, both ministers have agreed to take action 'within two weeks' against recruiting agencies in both countries.

There are more than 700 recruitment agencies in Kathmandu sending workers to Qatar, and there are 250 in Doha that hire Nepali workers.

Labour rights activists we interviewed doubt that the zero-cost migration deal will ever come into force because most Nepali manpower agencies have political protection who benefit from perpetuating the status quo.

State Minister Gurung himself is from the NC Deuba panel and his family owns a recruitment company. Enough said.



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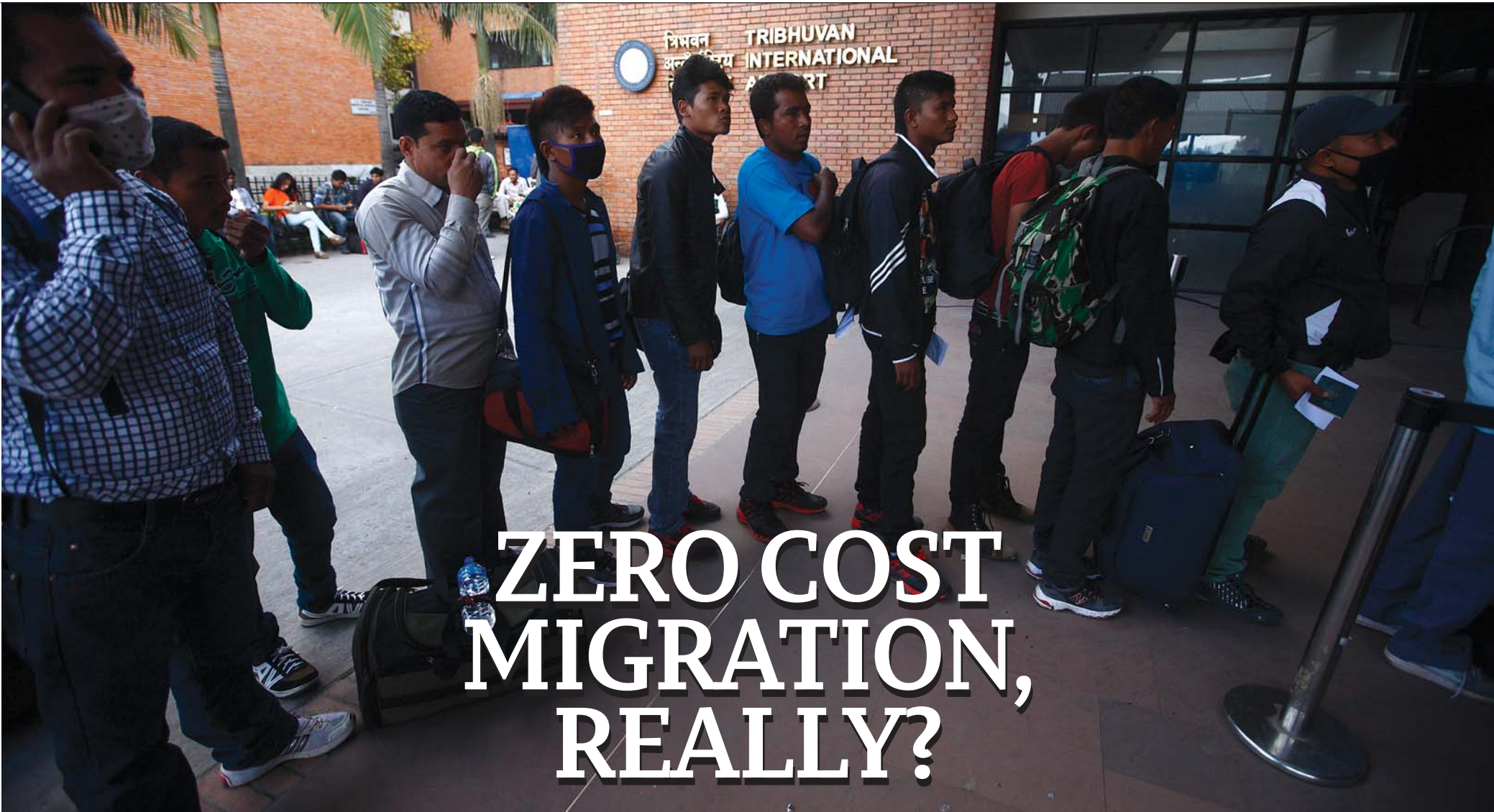
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Nepal and Qatar say an overseas contract worker shouldn't have to pay any fees to recruiters. Where have we heard that before?

OM ASTHA RAI

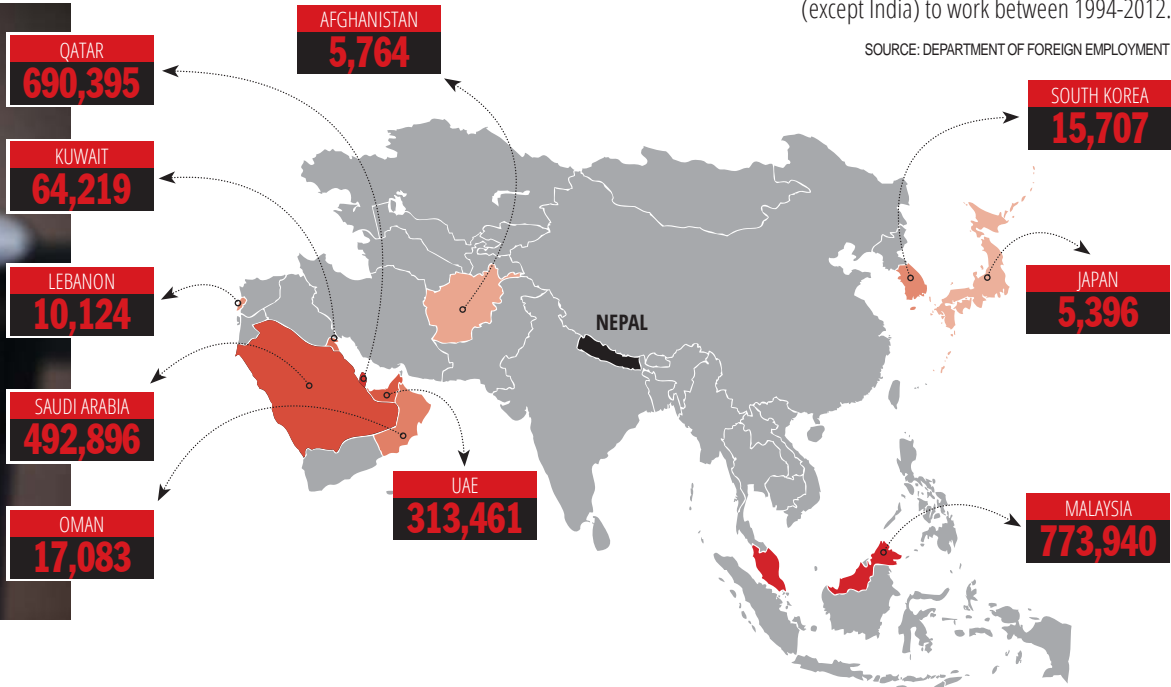
Where we are

Numbers of Nepalis who went to receiving countries (except India) to work between 1994-2012.

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT



PICS: GOPEN RAI



During his four-day visit to Nepal this week, Qatar's labour minister Abdullah Bin Saleh Mubarak Al-Khulaifi said migrant workers shouldn't have to pay anything to go to work in the gas-rich kingdom that has nearly half-a-million Nepali workers.

After a meeting with his Nepali counterpart in Kathmandu on 5 April, Al-Khulaifi told a press conference: "Qatari employers are required to pay for everything – from visa fees to air fares of migrant workers."

The Nepali language media reported Al-Khulaifi's remark as if it was a major breakthrough, and rejoiced that this would end extortion-like fees and exploitation of workers by recruiters in Nepal and Qatar. But as far back as 2005, Nepal and Qatar had already signed an agreement requiring Qatari employers to do exactly this: bear the entire cost of hiring workers from Nepal.

If that agreement had actually been in force, Nepali migrant workers would at most have to manage a few thousand rupees to contribute to their own welfare fund, receive documents from

government offices and bear the cost of domestic travel to Kathmandu to apply for jobs and to fly out.

However, Nepali recruiters have been fleecing outgoing workers, charging them anything between Rs 70,000 to Rs 100,000 from workers as 'facilitation fee'. Others have to pledge the first six months of what they earn just to pay the recruiters.

We asked Kumud Khanal of the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) why the 2005 agreement was never implemented. He passed the buck on to Qatari companies which he said wanted a cut. "As long as the Qatari recruitment agencies demand commissions from us, the zero cost deal will not be implemented. It is the Qatar government that needs to regulate its recruitment agencies. We just pass on what they charge us to the Nepali workers," he said.

The Qataris deny this, saying it is illegal to charge a fee that is passed on its overseas workers. Others, like Surya Nath Mishra, Nepal's former ambassador to Qatar, says Nepali recruiters are not above blame.

"It may be true that the Qatari companies also demand a cut for finding jobs for the workers, but the Nepali recruiters charge the workers much more than what they give to the Qataris."

Mishra says that during his tenure in Doha, he came across many Nepali workers who had paid more than Rs 100,000 to manpower agencies to go to Qatar. "I had recommended action against many manpower agencies that illegally charged money from migrant workers," he said, "but no one at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) did anything."

State Minister for Labour, Tek Bahadur Gurung, who met Al-Khulaifi this week says this time his government is committed to implementing the zero-cost deal. "We will soon visit Qatar and find out what we can do to ensure that Nepali workers get to go there without paying a single rupee," he told us.

Even so, the stranglehold of the manpower mafia and its nexus with Nepali politicians is so tight that many are skeptical that the zero-cost deal will ever be implemented. Said one labour

rights activist. "Jobless Nepalis are so desperate to migrate and there is just so much money to be made that in the end it is the Nepalis who are the worst exploiters of fellow-Nepalis."

Ganesh Gurung, an expert on migration and the remittance economy, says every one, except the poor and illiterate migrant workers, knew about the zero-cost deal but no one was willing to implement it. "On the sidelines of several international conferences, I have drawn the attention of the Nepali and Qatari officials to it," he says. "But, they have never been serious."

The renewed interest on the part of the Qataris to implement the zero-cost deal appears to be the result of international media exposing poor working conditions for migrants in that country. It is therefore clear that the Nepal government has been forced to be serious not because it wants to stop the exploitation of its own workers, but because the Qataris want to clean up their international image.

During his Nepal visit, Minister Al-Khulaifi sent out the message that Qatar is

committed to improving working conditions for migrant workers. He also promised to look into grievances of migrant workers, mainly about their salaries, over-time payments, health insurance and accommodation. But, he remained silent about the controversial Kafala system which human rights organisations say bonds migrant workers to their employers.

Unlike with Qatar, Nepal has not signed any other agreement requiring foreign employers to bear the entire migration cost of Nepali workers. But, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work says it all. If the ILO declaration is to be followed, Nepali migrant workers would not have to pay more than just Rs 25,000 to go to work in any country, not only Qatar. They would have to pay for service charges of manpower agencies, labor permits and health check-ups. But, they are paying at least Rs 90,000 or more for overseas jobs. To go to Malaysia, where 40 per cent of total Nepali migrants work, they are forced to pay around Rs 130,000.  @omastharai

Forgive us our press passes

Journalists like other citizens represent the country when abroad, let's behave



SURENDRA TANDUKAR

A journalist on an all-expenses paid junket was recently at Kathmandu airport immigration arguing that he didn't have to fill out the departure form because it was "unnecessary trouble". Following his lead, ten of his other colleagues did the same, going on to brag about how they used their press passes to cut queues, skip checks and get faster service.



BETWEEN THE LINES

Tsering Dolker Gurung

Such is the sense of entitlement among editors and reporters that they don't even realise how hypocritical they sound – the same people who report on the misuse of power by public officials show no qualms about abusing theirs.

To be sure, there are many responsible and considerate journalists around. Unfortunately, it has been my distinct (dis)pleasure to meet and travel with arrogant and ill-mannered ones who feel they are above everyone else.

Nearly all the 20-something reporters on a recent airline fam trip to Malaysia were men. They were determined to exhibit their zero civic sense, demonstrate scant consideration for others, and were setting a very bad example to foreigners about Nepal and Nepalis. Appearing late for every program, littering, and playing loud music were some of the more minor transgressions.

Crude, uncouth behaviour and lack of respect for the hosts sullied the image of our country. It got to the point where our Malaysian guide had to remind the visitors repeatedly that we were in his country not just as members of the media but as citizens of Nepal and it may be advisable to put on our best behaviour. Needless to say, the suggestion fell on deaf ears.

This wasn't the first time it happened. On an earlier trip to Turkey, there were similar

transgressions that left a bad impression on our hosts with the only consolation being that journalists from Pakistan behaved even worse. What our colleagues failed to realise was that the image we left of Nepalis as brash, undisciplined bumpkins would affect the treatment of fellow-Nepalis in future.

Malaysia is the top labour destination for Nepalis, with Qatar coming in a close second. Almost 40 per cent of Nepali overseas workers are currently employed in Malaysia's plantations, factories and gas stations. A Nepali security guard at the hotel related how Nepali workers have become easy targets for mugging because the local police don't bother to report crimes against them anymore.

"To them we are nobodies," he said. The Nepali embassy isn't much help, and as Nepali journalists on a free tour we must have reinforced that impression among Malaysians.

A journalist in the group was irked he wouldn't be receiving a daily allowance on the trip from the airline even though travel, hotel and food were all paid for. Another raised an objection that his visa fee would not be paid. Their argument was that a sponsored trip should cover

all costs. "We are journalists, we can't afford unnecessary expenses," whined one.

A journalism professor once told our media class at university that reporters should not even accept a free coffee from a source. That may be a bit too extreme and counterproductive for us in Nepal, but the point is a valid one: where do you draw the line on freebies?

Accepting a junket, a free lunch, or a bottle of whiskey from an embassy at Dasain makes you a taker, and opens you up to an obligation to the giver. When we go on a free trip, attend a paid conference, the sponsors feel they have more power to dictate what you write. And in the end it will be the individual's sense of integrity that will determine how true we are to ourselves and to provide fair and objective reporting to our readers.

On the bright side, for every Nepali journalist that will stick a chewing gum on the back of a bus seat and a hack who won't throw an empty bottle in the bin for the fear of looking less macho, there are others who are mindful of our actions and behaviour. May this kind grow in number. 🇳🇵

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prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS



Fresh face

Liril has announced the third installment of Liril Fresh Face. The winner gets a beach holiday package for two. Interested participants can type LFF<space>NAME & AGE and send it to 5455. Contest is open till 23 April.

Privilege riders

Hansraj Hulaschand, the official distributor of Bajaj bikes in Nepal has launched the Pulsar Blue Fire membership privilege cards. Pulsar riders can become a member after paying a Rs 3000 fee. Card holders will receive a Pulsar kit and discounts on spare parts and services at the company's service center in Gausingal and at various eateries and apparel showrooms across the country. Interested customers can register at the Bajaj showroom in Teku.



Buy one, get two

Reebok and Lee has announced a buy one, get one free offer on all their shoes and apparels for two weeks. The limited period sale is available at the brand's Kumaripati and KL Tower outlets.

New for old

Roots Fashion, the sole authorised distributor of adidas in Nepal, has launched its adidas old exchange offer for one month starting 3 April. Customers can bring their old but wearable sports shoes and enjoy a discount of Rs 2000-3000 on purchase of new adidas shoes.



One for all

On the occasion of the Nepali new year, Subisu Cablenet has launched its 'Subisu New year 2072-One for All' offer. Under this scheme customers can choose any one of the five packages-Clear TV Happy Intro Offer, Amazing InternetOffer, Internet & Clear TV super Combo Offer and Loyalty Offer-that best suits their needs.

Office 365

Microsoft has launched the Office 365, a full cloud service for businesses, education institutions and consumers in Nepal. Office 365 is the online version of Microsoft Office. It facilitates both online and offline access enabling users to work from anywhere, anytime and across various devices with unlimited storage.



New tab

Micromax has launched its new mobile device-Micromax Tab P666 in the Nepali market. The tablet comes with 8-inch multi touch display with a 800 x 1280 pixels resolution. It is equipped with Android KitKat 4.4 operating system, 1.2 GHz Intel Atom processor and 1 GB RAM. It is priced at Rs 19,470.

Dates

Everest Bank has unveiled its new EBL Calendar-2072. The calendar focuses on the natural and cultural heritages of the country. Suresh Man Shrestha, Secretary of Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation inaugurated the calendar.



Cool products

Nepa Hima, the authorised distributor of Whirlpool, has introduced a new range of products: single door Ice Magic refrigerators, double door Neo series, triple door Proto series, and top loading semi and fully automatic washing machines. The company will also be adding French style side-by-side door refrigerators in the market in the coming month.

Dual smart

Huawei has unveiled its Huawei C8816D smartphone in the Nepali market. The smarphone can be used for both GSM and CDMA networks. The phone comes equipped with a 1.2 GHz quad core processor, Android KitKat 4.3 operating system, 1GB RAM. and a 8 megapixel rear camera.



Nearing the goal

The government and opposition have realised the futility of confrontation and need to end the deadlock on the constitution

Looking beyond the senseless violence that played itself out on the streets across the country this week, there is an encouraging development taking place quietly behind the scenes. And this may be the key to ending the current stalemate.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

For most of the 16 months since the 2013 elections, the ruling NC and the UML were embroiled in a covert battle for power. Under PM aspirant KP Oli, the UML had hardened its position on the constitution. And the hooliganism of the Maoist-Madhesi opposition inside the CA in January was rightly condemned by all quarters, did not seem unprovoked.

UML leaders were so domineering in dialogue there was a time when Prime Minister Koirala hardly opened his mouth at all during all-party meetings. Lack of cooperation from senior UML leaders, including his cabinet ministers, led Koirala



ANANDA RAM DANGOL

to believe that there was an inside conspiracy to make his government fail. Koirala looked every bit the lame-duck we said he was.

But, even as politics on the ground looks muddled, the parties have never been so close to resolving the disputes in the constitution. It has practically been settled that Nepal will adopt an improved parliamentary system that will

give more stability to future governments. The parties have agreed to a mixed electoral system with at least 40 per cent of the representatives to be elected proportionally from marginalised communities. The issue of having a constitutional court has also been settled and so is the matter of establishing probe committees to look into war-time atrocities.

Today, it has all boiled down to the number, name and

the boundaries of the future provinces. The number now seems to be less of a concern, with both sides zeroing in on six provinces. This leaves two final issues of names and boundaries of the provinces.

I have often argued in this space that it is best to leave those things to future provincial assemblies. We only need to look across the border, where Calcutta became Kolkata and Madras became Chennai after five decades, to understand that cribbing over the names makes no sense. Negotiators must focus on the more contentious issue of boundaries.

To its credit, the NC has understood the political irrelevance of harping about a north-south federation. No matter how ideal it sounds, for political reasons it is no longer an option. KP Oli and his ultra-nationalist cohorts deem north-south integration necessary for national integrity and social harmony. But they are deliberately misreading the wise words of Prithivi Narayan Shah who underscored the need to respect the diversity of this land to keep its population united.

To fully appreciate the demand for federalism, we must

first concede that it is neither a Maoist brainchild nor something born out of regional political ambitions of Madhesi leaders. It is a natural aspiration harboured by a democracy where people dream of bringing government to their doorsteps. If the Local Self-governance Act 1999 was a step in that direction, federalism is a further step ahead.

Once we understand this, it isn't too difficult to empathise with Janajati and Madhesi demands for some sort of reflection of their identity in the future provinces. Nepal's Adivasis and Janajatis in hills, and Madhesi communities of Tarai have a distinct way of life. Their rich languages, dress, history and traditions bind them to their territory. For too long, these diverse identities have been denied due space within the bracket of national identity. Homogenising the Nepali identity in the name of national integrity and fostering nationalism will not work anymore. In fact it is precisely that which has divided us as a nation.

The good news is that PM Koirala and his team understand this and are in a hurry due to their party's convention. They have extended an unconditional deal to the opposition for dialogue, holding off CA proceedings for now. Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his allies only needed an excuse to retract from the political blunder of leaving the talks and going for a strike.

There is no sign yet, that the UML will play a constructive role in the process. Their disdain for the Maoists is natural given both parties contest elections for the same left vote bank. But Oli and his comrades must decide if they want to risk being seen as the lingering roadblock to an agreement.

The ruling parties and the opposition have run out of options and will eventually return back to the table soon. Let's hope, they go the distance this time. 🇳🇵

@AnuragAcharya

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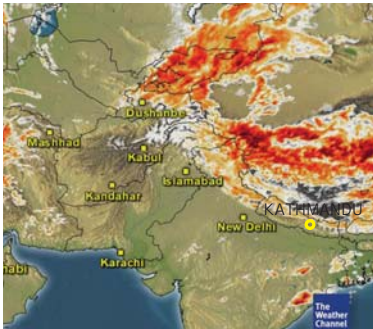
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PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT

would have been a boring town.”

Davidson started working on *NEPS* from the standpoint of visual anthropology inspired by the French filmmaker, Jean Rouch. It is a cinema vérité technique that lets the camera roll without the characters being guided.

Last month, Davidson was in Pokhara (*pic*) to shoot his documentary accompanied by Bijay Gurung, a young Nepali from Nuneaton who came back to Nepal to convert to Christianity. He will join the British Army when he returns to Nuneaton.

The young filmmaker knew it would be challenging to shoot in Nepal as he knew nothing about the country before arriving, and sure enough there were surprises and delays.

“All this waiting around made me understand Nepalis so much better,” says Davidson. Even if he never tried to push things in Pokhara, he admits some of what was natural for the characters did not seem natural to him, as a filmmaker.

“*NEPS* might not be the most realistic film, but it’s the most honest,” Davidson told *Nepali Times* after a shooting at Pokhara’s Peace Pagoda (*pic, bottom*).



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

English filmmaker comes to Pokhara to document young British-Nepalis

Nepalis are often asked by foreigners if they have climbed Mt Everest. In Britain, people keep asking them if they are Gurkhas, particularly in towns like Nuneaton where there are large Nepali populations due to Gurkha bases nearby.

Having grown up with Nepalis, English filmmaker Joel Davidson wanted to challenge these

stereotypes through a film. “I gained an insight into a fascinating community, and I thought the best way to respect their culture was to capture it with my camera,” he says.

A year ago, Davidson started shooting short film portraits of Nepalis in Nuneaton, 165km from London. He noticed that his subjects had much more to say

and that is when he hit on the idea of making a mini-documentary (a shorter form of a documentary, varying between 2 and 25 minutes), called *NEPS* on them.

The Media production graduate from Coventry University chose to focus on his friends, the second and third generations of Nepalis who had left Nepal when they were teenagers. “I wanted to observe

these youngsters who have British citizenship and at the same time have strong cultural roots in Nepal,” he says.

Davidson says young Nepalis of Nuneaton are a positive representation of the youth in general. “They organise events that benefit not only their community, but the entire town,” he says. “If Nepalis were not there, Nuneaton

In Nepal, language was also a barrier. While shooting in England, the characters were speaking in English and as soon as they arrived in Nepal, they instinctively switched to Nepali.

When he started shooting *NEPS* in England, Davidson received plenty of support from the Nepali community there. “They are really proud to see that someone is interested in their culture,” says the filmmaker. “And they are excited to watch the film.”

Davidson recently received significant financial help from Joanna Lumley, the English actress known for her campaign to provide all Gurkha veterans the right to settle in Britain. Her father served in the British Army with Gurkhas.

NEPS will be released in June, and Davidson plans to show it in ethnographic film festivals in Europe. He will also travel with *NEPS* in England to screen it in towns with large populations of Nepalis. 🇳🇵

Stéphane Huët

nepalitimes.com

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EVENTS



Photo walk,

Calls open for professional, amateur and beginner level photographers to take part in a global photo walk. Proceeds will go towards educating children.
18 April, Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, Pokhara, Dharan, info.colorsfnepal@gmail.com, www.colorsfnepal.com

Remembering the lost sculptures,

A series of photo-realistic paintings by artist Joy Lynn Davis documenting community response to the theft of stone sculptures from Kathmandu Valley and research about the sites where the sculptures originated.
Inauguration on 10 April, 5pm, exhibition till 22 May, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, (01)4220735, swosti@nepalartcouncil.org.np

Cycle against VAW,

Join a group of activists as they cycle through the city, seeking commitment from major political parties and media houses to fight violence against women.
11 April, 7am, (01)4247758, (01)6207758, ayon@ayon.org, www.ayon.org

No plastic,

A 2km march organised by the Himalayan Climate organisation in support of the

government's decision to ban plastic bags in Kathmandu.
14 April, 7.30am, Bhrikuti Mandap, www.himalayancclimate.org

Etched art,

An exhibition of etchings by recipients of the Australian Himalayan Foundation Art Award Program 2014, Sauranga Darshandhari and Surendra Maharjan.
Inauguration on 15 April, 5.30pm, exhibition till 5 May, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4218048, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

Heritage ride,

A 60km bicycle ride to explore the seven world heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley on the occasion of International Day for Monuments and Sites.
Rs 500, 18 April, 9841729965, tdl.p4p@gmail.com

In retrospective,

An exhibition of the works of Nepali draftsman, Birendra Pratap Singh, from 1971 to 2015.
Till 26 April, Nepal Art Council Gallery, Babar Mahal, (01)4218048, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

Women power,

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

Creative rendezvous,

A workshop on 3D artwork using papier mache, clay, cloth and more.
Rs 3600, 25 to 29 May, 10am to 2pm, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486, collective@sattya.org

Welcoming 2072



Kathmandu Fest 2072,

Usher in the Nepali New Year with music, games and food.
14 April, 10.30am to 8pm, Bhrikuti Mandap, 9841373229, swagatamevents@gmail.com, www.swagatamevents.com

Seto Jatra

Submerge into the kingdom of white.
13 April, 6pm to 2.30am, Malla Hotel, Thamel, 9851211900, 9801132327



Electronic Eve,

Welcome the year 2072 BS with DJ BPM.
13 April, 6pm, Trisara, Lajimpat, (01)4410200, trisara.restaurant@gmail.com

Treasure hunt,

Each participating team has to complete in a series of 10 unique tasks related to culture and environment to win the big prize.
Rs 500 per team, 1pm, Patan Darbar Square, nyca.np@gmail.com, 9803049718

DINING



Chongqing Fast Food,

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Soaltee Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999



Grill Me,

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Jhamsikhel, (01)5535294

Coffee, cake and wine ,

Opening of the first rooftop street workout park, theatrical intermezzo by SPAK and live music jam session by KJC. Besides that coffee, wine and yummy cakes.
10 April, 3 to 7pm, Karma Coffee, Gyanmandala, Jhamsikhel



Saigon Pho,

Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes.
Lajimpat, (01)4443330

Natsul,

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Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)229198

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www.wannapumapost.com

MUSIC



Sound of Blues,

A live concert by Mukti and the Revival.
10 April, 8pm,
House of Music, Thamel,
9851075172,
sanzey@hotmail.com

Locals' night,

A group of local artists will be playing their latest works for an indie-electro-folk night.
10 April, 7.30pm, Places Restaurant & Bar, Thamel, (01)4700413,
kathmanduplaces@gmail.com



Brass tune,

A soulful and passionate local brass band takes charge of the night.
Rs 200, Base Camp, Arun Thapa Chowk,
9841226397, pareshkshrestha@gmail.com



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95 €, 24 to 27 April, Kakani, 9802013960,
info@urnepal.com, kgarira@gmail.com,
www.urnepal.com

Dancing in the sun,

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Rs. 4500/person, 18 and 19 April, The Last Resort, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525,
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Phewa Lake, Pokhara, (01)4411855

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Bhaktapur, 9851024137

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MANGA MANIA IN 'MANDU

Japan's most famous cultural export is suddenly the rage among yo

SAHINA SHRESTHA

It may have been a long time coming, but Kathmandu is suddenly under the grip of the Manga fever -- all thanks to cable tv and the Internet.

For the uninitiated, Manga is the Japanese term for comics and refers to graphic novels that form the basis for most anime series played on our tv screens: Doraemon, Naruto, Dragonball Z.

While there are lots of fans of

the comics, businesses here have failed to cater to this growing craze. Filling in the demand-supply gap are young entrepreneurs like 19-year-old Wataru Ram Shrestha who opened Kathmandu's first store, The Otaku Store catering to manga and anime enthusiasts.

It sells posters, merchandise, and accessories of different anime/manga themes, which Shrestha imports from China.

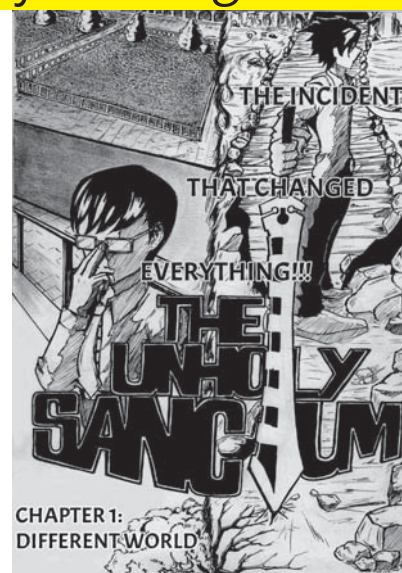
"When I opened my shop, I didn't think I would be getting so many customers," says Shrestha whose store is open only on weekends. "Rather than

making money, my intent was to promote manga culture here."

Shalini Rana, 25, Kavin Shah, 26, and Krishant Rana, 24, also got together to start Nepal's first manga magazine called *Otaku Next*, which published its first issue last December.

"What we are trying to do is bring manga and anime fans together to create a culture and build a community," says Rana, who herself does a lot of fanart.

A large part of Manga's appeal seems to lie in Nepali youth feeling



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२ वर्ष

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नगद छुट रु १५०
गोल्ड स्टार शू को
रु.१००० बराबरको गिफ्ट भौचर
र साथमा पाइलट पेन सेट



३ वर्ष

ग्राहक शुल्क रु ५२५० मा
नगद छुट रु २५०

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and elaborate storylines spanning a broad range of genres catering to both males and females of all age groups.

Since hardcopy manga are hard to come by and can be quite expensive in Nepal, readers here mostly visit manga hosting websites, which provide scanned and translated manga for free. For some a trip abroad turns to be a perfect opportunity to indulge in their interest.

"When I visited Japan last year, I brought home a suitcase full of manga," says Wataru Shrestha. Shalini Rana also bought stacks of manga while studying in Singapore. "I made it a point to buy only those manga which have not been turned into anime," she says.

Otaku Next also organised a manga competition last year, which received 15 entries, with the youngest participant being a 13-year-old. People were queuing up to buy their first issue during its launch.

"There was a reader who reviewed each and every story from the magazine and many others, compared us to *Shonen Jump* (one of the most popular manga magazines). While being compared is certainly a challenge, it also shows the level of manga literacy we have here," says Krishant Rana of *Otaku Next*.

Otaku Next is currently working with 16 Nepali writers/artists on its second issue, which is planned for release at the end of May. IT students Bikin Ghimire, 22 and Rasik Rai, 21 who work under the name Jitomu are excited about the release of their manga-*The Unholy Sanctum*, which is included in the issue.

"The story is about virtual world taking over reality. We know we may have shortcomings and we will be compared to others but we are sure we will find readers for our manga," says Ghimire.

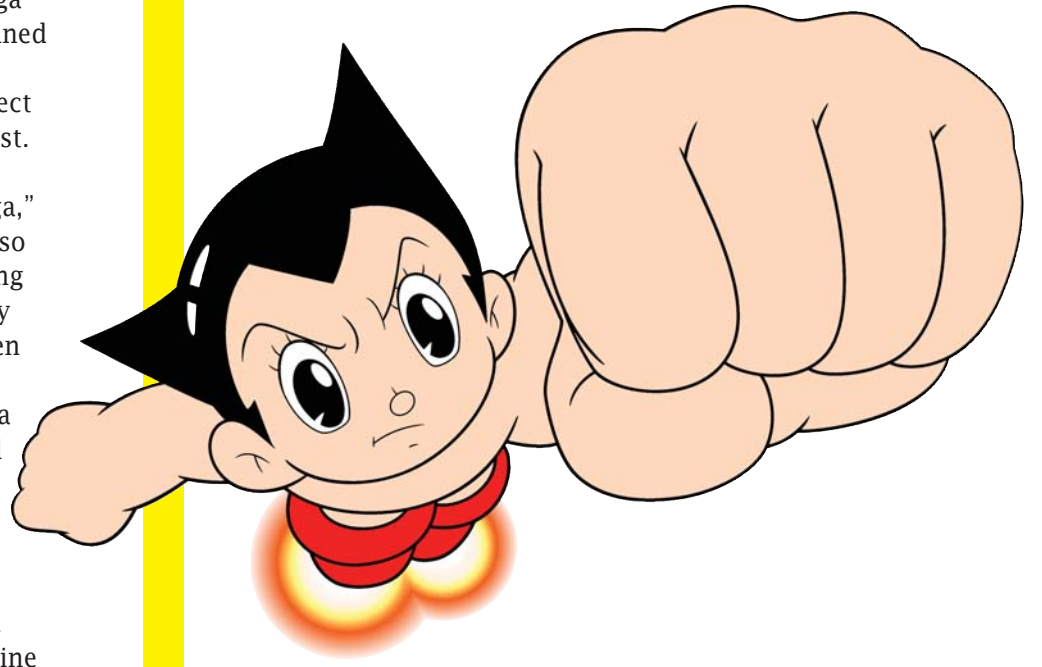
Although there is no shortage of manga and anime lovers here, lack of physical space to convene means the community is scattered. Says Dipanker Shrestha Tamang, 27, an avid reader of manga: "We don't know where to find people with similar interests, this limits the experience." 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

■ Manga artist at work



MANGA 101



Manga is the Japanese word for comics. It can refer to either Japanese comics or to any comics that follow the visual conventions of Japanese comics, regardless of their origin.

The word manga was popularised (not invented) by the Japanese woodblock print artist Hokusai, who became famous by his woodblock image of a giant wave with Mt Fuji in the background.

Manga is composed of two Chinese characters: the first meaning "in spite of oneself" and the second meaning "picture". It has been used to describe various comical images for at least two centuries.

Japan has a long and rich history of graphic arts, and the picture scrolls of medieval Japan are the first examples of sequential art where pictures and texts are combined to tell stories. *Kibyoshi* (yellow cover books), popular during the 18th century Japan were manga-like story books for adults in which text was placed around ink-brush illustration.

Some consider Rakuten Kitazawa as the founder of modern manga for

his popular comics including *Tagosaku to Mokube no Tokyo Kenbutsu* (Tagosaku and Mokube's Sightseeing in Tokyo). He was also the founder of *Tokyo Puck* magazine, which showcased Japanese cartoonists. Manga targeted towards boys (shonen) and girls (shojo) were already popular in the early 1900s. But it was Osamu Tezuka who gave it a global appeal with his creation *Mighty Atom*, an animated version of which was broadcast in the US under the name *Astro Boy* in 1960s.

Until Tezuka's time, most manga were drawn from a two-dimensional perspective and in-style of a stage play. Tezuka introduced cinematic technique to his compositions modeled after French and German movies. He manipulated angles and devoted panels to capture movements and facial expressions. This not only broadened but also restructured the whole manga market.

Today manga is an integral part of Japanese culture spanning genres, it caters to all age groups throughout the world and has also influenced Chinese and Korean Manhwa and manga artists.

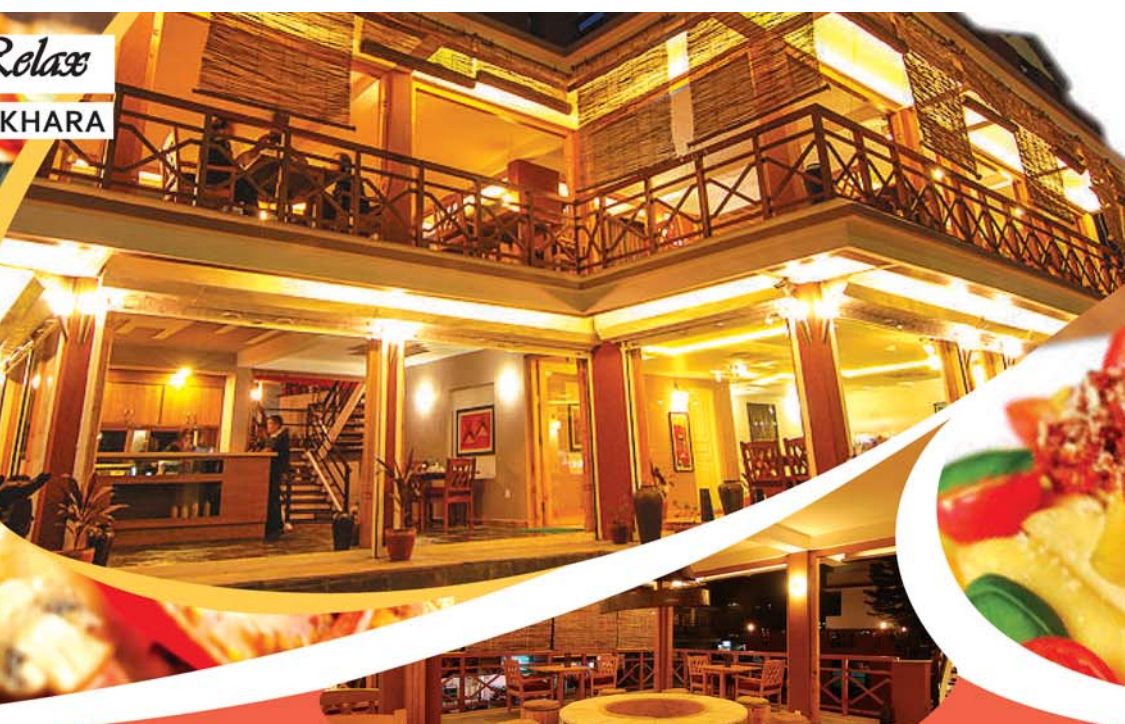
Young urban Nepalis

connected with stories and being able to relate with the characters. Fans also seem to appreciate the creativity and imagination that a mangaka (manga artist) brings to each comic.

"Mangas are much more imaginative and detailed with the story plot lasting years as compared to other comics or graphic novels," says Nirosch Dhital, 24, who became a fan after being initiated into manga in 2009.

What also sets manga apart from other comics are its panels that read right to left, and its distinctive artwork

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When the unassuming but handsome, and above all loveable, Paul Walker died, partway through the filming of *Furious 7*, the latest sequel of an immensely successful franchise of which he is one of the pivotal stars, most people were horrified



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

by the nature of his accident: in a speeding car, not driven by himself, that crashed into a tree killing both people instantaneously.
Walker's death was an immense

loss to the Fast and Furious series, which ostensibly is about fast cars and furious men, but includes a fairly balanced dose of family values, romance and, in this particular installment, some jaw dropping, completely tongue-in-cheek action sequences that will make your eyes pop out as you grip your seat in delighted disbelief.
The producers decided not to have Brian O'Connor (Walker's character) die in the film, a smart decision that grips the audience throughout the film, our hearts aching at the blonde, good-natured specter of a now deceased, but incredibly charismatic actor; nobody wants to see Brian O'Conner die onscreen, his death off-screen is already too much for his admirers.
Even if you are not a fan of the series, I would still urge you to go see this one. While it is a tad too long, the stunts, the camaraderie between a multi-ethnic cast that includes Michelle Rodriguez (as

Letty), Vin Diesel (as Dom), Dwayne Johnson (as Luke Hobbs), Tyrese Gibson (as Roman Pearce), Ludacris (as Tej Parker), with the additions of Jason Statham (as a baddie), a canny, savvy Kurt Russell (as a mysterious, nebulous government agent), and the solid storyline, albeit a bit clichéd, but leavened by the astonishingly paced action packed set pieces, leaves something for everybody to delight in, unless you really have no sense of humour and no appreciation for the truly ridiculous.

Furious 7 is far from a perfect film. Yet, against all odds, and a terrible tragedy, this is a film that will undoubtedly become a cult classic and not just because it memorialises Paul Walker. Directed with a surprising lightness of touch, considering the heaviness of the mechanics involved in the action sequences, James Wan, a newcomer to the franchise that has been mostly honed in its style by Justin Lin (who directed four of the seven films), manages to keep the furious, heart-stoppingly exciting action sequences balanced with surprisingly reasonable, believable dialogue.
As the film comes to a close, everyone's hearts will tighten, unless you really are the ultimate sceptic, and if that is the case, you really shouldn't be in a theater watching a film that is mainly about fast, beautiful cars and the people that love them.

nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



NEPAL ARMY

CHANGING ROLES: Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Gaurav Sumsher Rana meets with newly appointed Chinese army attache for Nepal Senior Col Liu Xiaoguang and outgoing attache Senior Col Cheng Xizhong at Nepal Army Headquarters on Tuesday.



INDIAN EMBASSY

IN MEMORY: Piyush Srivastava, Charge d' Affaires of Embassy of India lays a wreath on the tomb of Indian freedom fighter Begum Hazrat Mahal on her death anniversary at Jame Masjid in Bagh Bazar on Tuesday.



DEVAKI BISTA

WELL VERSED: National poet Madhav Prasad Ghimire is felicitated by the Women Lyricist Association Nepal in Kathmandu on Monday.



GOPEN RAI

EASTER: Young Christian girls read out their prayers during an Easter function organised at the Assumption Church in Dhobighat on Saturday.

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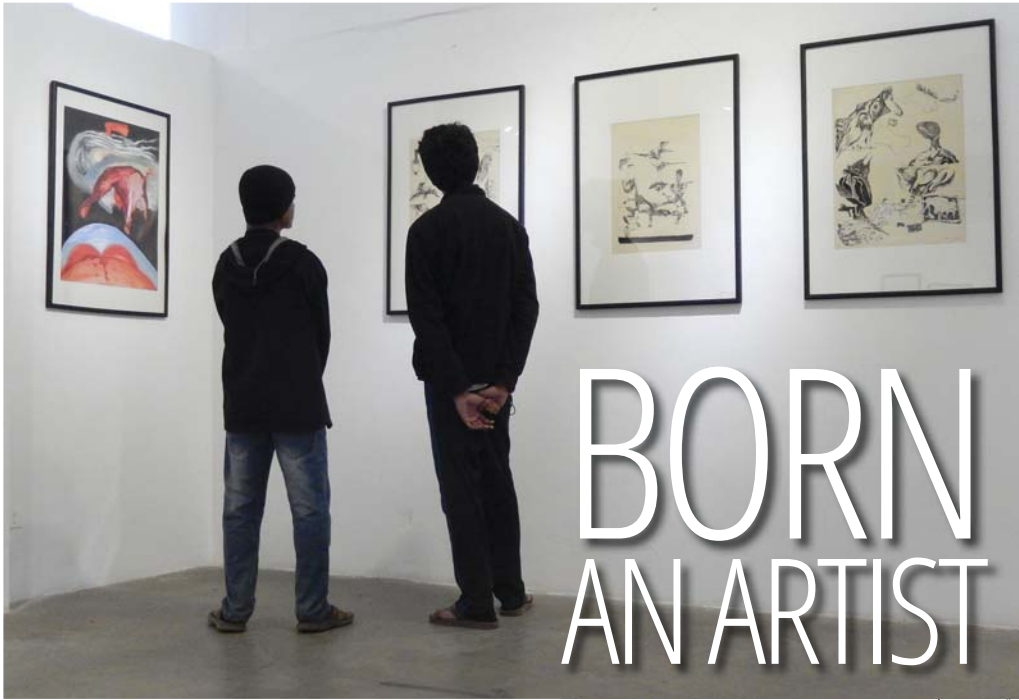
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All art lovers in Nepal will have heard of artist Birendra Pratab Singh's famous quote: "I feel I was already ready to paint when I was born." Singh who started painting at an early age of eight is one of the most respected names in the Nepali art scenario.

Nepal Art Council (NAC) is currently exhibiting about 300 of Singh's artworks created between 1971 and 2015. The art exhibition is directed by Sangeeta Thapa and will be on display till 26 April. This retrospective features drawings, etchings and paintings, representing Singh's artistic evolution.

The mediums and the styles might have changed over the years, but Singh points out the common denominator in his work: "All my pieces are dedicated to the environment."

In his colourful artwork, where reference to nature is more obvious, the monstrosity is also omnipresent. "That's my way to depict man's influence on our environmental degradation," Singh explains.



At the beginning of his career, Singh did several spot drawings of the crumbling architecture he witnessed in the Kathmandu Valley. "In a way, my sketches were an attempt to restore these buildings in my head," he says.

Showing his most recent series of paintings made during a nine-year retreat in Dhulikhel, Singh remarked that he created

that set of artwork differently. "I didn't plan the paintings before my paintbrush touched the lokta paper," he explains.

Singh may seem very spontaneous, but he is also very meticulous at revealing the detailed precisions in his sketches. "Whenever a painting or a sketch is not good, I just tear the paper and restart from the beginning," he adds.

Through this retrospective at NAC, we navigate in time and style into Singh's prolific career. "This is only 30% of my life," says the artist who has never stopped working since he graduated from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1979.

On the timeline summarising his career at the beginning of the exhibition, there is a gap between 1997 and 2004. During this period, Singh was contributing illustrations to four Kathmandu publications.

In his curator's statement, Sujan Chitrakar recalls that Nepali artists met 'considerable challenges' developing the modern Nepali art. But Singh feels they still remain today. "Anyway I rely only on my hands," he comments.

Nonetheless, Singh says this exhibition has helped him gain recognition. "After seeing my work here at NAC, my family realised I've done something in my life," he says. However this exhibition is not an ending for the artist. He is already planning to go to Helambu to finish working on a series of 38 paintings of the Buddha.  *Stéphane Huët*

*In retrospective
Till 26 April,
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(01)4218048,
www.siddharthaartgallery.com*

Hyatt's new pasta and risotto promotional menu reaffirms The Rox's ability to serve up a delectable buffet of Italian comfort food. Diners can choose from vegetarian or non-vegetarian offerings and can also order from the Rox's regular menu.

Before the Italian feast, diners can expect to start their meal with slices of freshly baked olive focaccia bread. The bread was soft and easy to tear, and came with a tasty sundried tomato paste.

The vegetarian soup, a spicy carrot and squash reduction, topped with arugula pesto, had a velvety smooth texture, with the deseeded chillies providing just the right hint of heat. Comforting and simple, it was the quintessential starter to an Italian meal.

For non-vegetarians, there was the bacon and tortellini soup which was slightly salty. Coupled with aged crusted parmesan and cheese bread, this would be the perfect dish for savoury soup lovers.

For the salads, the vegetarian option edged out its non-vegetarian counterpart. The vegetarian macaroni salad was a refreshing mix of macaroni, onions, tomatoes and oregano tossed in Italian vinaigrette. The light and perfectly seasoned sour cream ganache topping complemented the



The Rox

macaroni pasta, and provided a refreshing lift to the taste buds.

Executive Chef Gopi Nandakumar's attention to detail was apparent in his choices of pasta and their accompaniments. With macaroni, a "softer" pasta, he used crunchy fresh onions and tomatoes. On the other hand, he paired penne, a slightly "tougher" pasta, with shredded pieces of poached chicken, which were cooked in white wine for the non-vegetarian salad.

The main dishes were also well-curated, allowing individuals to get a taste of classic Italian cuisine not commonly found in Nepal. The Lamb Ravioli was filled with



roasted lamb ragout, mushrooms and topped with generous shavings of cheese. The handmade ravioli pasta was cooked al-dente, complementing the tender lamb ragout well.

Vegetarians are also in for a treat as the chef insists on using the best ingredients like morel and button mushrooms for the vegetarian pasta. The mushrooms were sautéed till tender, and the



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pasta came in a delicious rich and creamy sauce.

The meal gets more exciting with the risotto dishes. The vegetarian risotto was wrapped in vine leaves as the chef wanted to present the classic risotto in a "unique and interesting way". The sundried tomato risotto was neither acerbic nor too sweet.

The non-vegetarian risotto was richer in taste as it was cooked with saffron. Packed with fresh prawns, squid and rainbow trout, the seafood risotto was tastier than the vegetarian option. Similar

to the pasta, the risotto was also cooked al-dente, and had a good crunch to it.

The dessert was an ingenious spin on the classic mille feuille. Filo pastry was used instead of puff pastry. Sprinkled with sugar and caramelised, the filo pastry was transformed into a crunchy sheet of saccharine goodness, layered with sweet strawberry cream. Drizzled in chocolate sauce, the dessert sealed the meal perfectly.

The pasta and risotto promotion at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu starts from 15 April and is slated to last till the end of the month.  *Cynthia Choo*

How to get there: The Rox restaurant and bar in Hyatt is located in Boudha, Kathmandu.



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Overcoming depression

Hi again,
In our society mental health illness is a taboo and is synonymous with going 'psychiatric ward' crazy, which it is not. We all have weak



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING
Anjana Rajbhandary

moments but if you are down for a period of two weeks or longer: it is likely that you have depression. Germanwings co-pilot Andreas

Lubitz's medical records showed that he had been diagnosed with depression, and till a day before he deliberately crashed Flight 9525, he was researching the term 'manic depression'. Awareness, knowledge and support are vital to overcome depression.

Hi, I was a good student in school but started doing badly in college. Seeing other people who were better than me in studies really affected my self-esteem, I failed classes and became very negative, and then was unable to find a job. I am in debt and my father is paying the broker. I went abroad to work. I am too

embarrassed to go back home because I feel I have let down my family. I don't know what to do with my life. I am very depressed. Please tell me what to do.
-BD

AR: I am so sorry to hear about your situation, I cannot imagine how hard this must be for you. Do not feel alone because there are many others who are in a similar place. The first thing I would suggest is to seek support, either from your friends or co-workers. Maybe try to talk to your family, I am sure they would like to hear from you, and will most probably try their best to help you. You

should try to find a support group, or talk to a therapist. Therapy helps many people with depression. I am not sure which country you are in-which may affect the mental health support available.

You choose your own thoughts so you should believe that you will get better. I know it is hard but you need to keep reminding yourself that you will overcome this. An individual's will power can be strengthened, and once you have the will to get better, you will. Try to stay active and be outdoors. Be social whenever possible. Focus on a healthy diet. Practice mindfulness, be in the moment instead of thinking of all the negative things

that have happened in the past: what you do now is going to affect your future, look forward not behind. Medication is not for everyone but it has helped people. Most of the time depression is not a permanent life changer, up to 90 per cent of people with severe depression can be treated. Have a strong mind. Don't give up. Have faith in yourself because depression can be managed.

However, easier said than done. You have to be patient as it will take time. Talk to someone soon. I believe that you can do this, so should you. Never give up on yourself. Write again if you need more help. 🇳🇵

Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health. Send your queries to: askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or @AnjyRajy

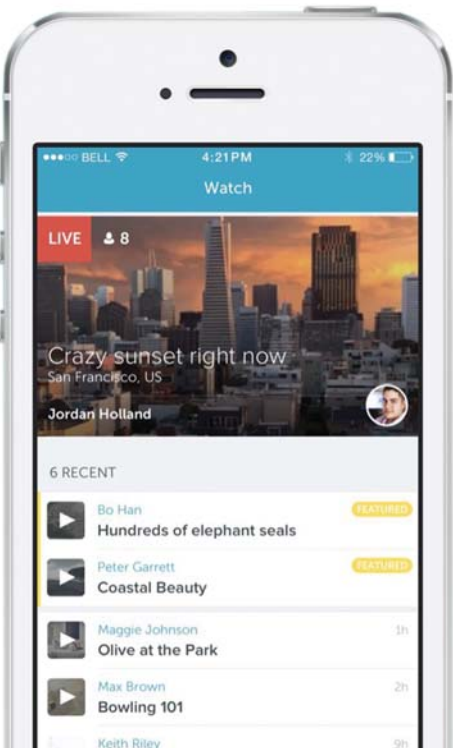
GIZMO by YANTRICK

THROUGH ANOTHER'S EYES

The team behind the latest live streaming app Periscope writes they wanted 'to build the closest thing to teleportation' on the company website, and this reviewer agrees that the goal has been achieved.

You can now follow someone on a motorbike ride through New York City, stroll down the streets of Walt Disney World, or even watch an amazing sunset in South Africa – I did all this in under an hour.

Despite not being the first of such services, Periscope's community has grown more quickly than its competitors because of its exclusive feature that allows broadcasters and viewers to see real-time comments and likes without posting them onto Twitter. It also gives the audience a chance to influence what is being filmed without having to be physically there and that opens up opportunities



for professionals like travel bloggers and journalists to see more. Senior producer for BBC Nepali Service, Jitendra Raut, has already hopped onto the bandwagon and broadcasted live the exhibition of Toni Hagen's photographs at the Patan Museum this week.


What makes this new app so appealing is not just the ability to share our experiences in real time over the internet, but also Periscope's beautiful user interface that makes it such a joy to use. It is reminiscent of the design language used by Twitter, which acquired Periscope last month.


Twitter no longer allows apps like Meerkat to reveal its mutual users, which is now a feature exclusive to Periscope. However, it is still too early to declare a winner as Meerkat and Periscope still have a lot to learn from each other.

Periscope brings live these visual experiences across continents, and users are quick to realise this even from its beta stages. And, you also have the authority to choose to share your recordings with just your loved ones or the world right from your mobile device.

Unfortunately, that power is only available on iOS devices for now but the company says the Android version will be launched soon. 🇳🇵


YANTRICK'S VERDICT: Periscope allows you to travel the world without having to spend a rupee.

 **Periscope by Twitter, Inc. is available for FREE on the Apple App Store.**

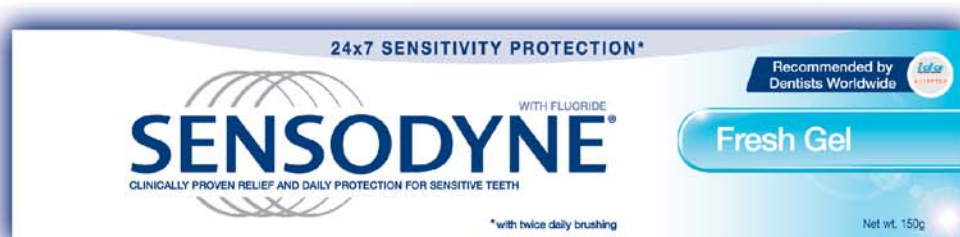


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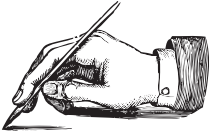
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The landscape of fear

It is now the turn of the Maoists to be afraid: of karma and the International Criminal Court

‘Remember the good old days when all we had to worry about was the earthquake?’ So began a Moving Target column in this newspaper dated May 2007, titled ‘Innocence lost’.

The war and aftermath introduced an alarming variety of worries that were far more complex than what we were used



MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

to. Murder, extortion, abduction and violent crime all competed for our attention, each new outrage taught us new things to fear, and somehow the peace agreement only made things worse.

When the Maoists unleashed their YCL thugs on the populace, a tsunami of extortion and violence rocked the valley, making it clear the theatre of war had simply shifted to the capital where the money is. By the time militant unionism had shut down all the factories, kidnapping was the only growth industry in town.

An unexpected knock on the gate could trigger panic, people grew suspicious of each other and the streets emptied of pedestrians

by 8pm. Fear permeated Kathmandu society, especially among the business community and middle class, and bearing witness to this loss of innocence was an experience I wish I never had.

The decimation of the Maoists in the last election changed everything. As the losers collapsed in disarray, people soon realised they had nothing more to fear and the cities of the valley sprung back to life.

Fast forward to the present, where I’m pleased to report that, despite everything, natural laws still apply: what goes around still comes around and the tables have now turned in the landscape of fear. While the people breathe a sigh of relief and go back to worrying about the earthquake, those guilty of traumatising an entire nation are now squirming in fear of retribution.

Col. Lama’s arrest in the UK for war crimes sent a shiver down the collective spine of both the military and Maoist leadership. No more junkets to Europe or America without the risk of getting busted for crimes against humanity and the army’s afraid any support witnesses they send will share the same fate.

The irony of seeing a Maoist-led government leap to the defence of an army officer accused of torturing their cadres kept things interesting, inasmuch as it



exposed their fears of being next.

More recently, Prachanda has been publicly whining about plots to assassinate him, perhaps to avenge the countless murders committed in his name. This man of the people never goes anywhere without a phalanx of armed bodyguards to protect him from... the people.

The recent Supreme Court decision to forbid blanket amnesty for serious crimes as proposed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has the Maoist

brass panicking further. The court’s insistence that cases already filed can’t be shuffled off to the TRC for whitewashing is the worst news they’ve had in a long time. Even the hundreds of cases sneakily dismissed by the Bhattarai government can now be reopened, adding greatly their growing litany of dread. Sound familiar? Ironically enough, as their fears multiply the people’s worries diminish.

Last week, six Maoist parties (in a country where one is plenty)

submitted a memo ‘demanding’ (translation from Mao-speak to plain English: begging) the PM to overrule this recent verdict -- in effect imploring the highest elected official in the land to break the law (just this once) so they can’t be prosecuted for breaking every law in the books.

The list of luminaries who signed this petition reads like a who’s who of war criminals, each surrounded in their respective factions by a coterie of equally guilty comrades. Thank the gods irony lives on in the erstwhile kingdom. The high and mighty who robbed and killed with impunity, secure in their status above the law, now live in abject fear of justice being served.

The Maoists may feel they can manipulate the legal system like they once did the villagers but justice takes many forms and will eventually prevail. Call it karma or call it the International Criminal Court in the Hague, the blood on their hands can’t be washed off by the TRC or anyone else.

If history is any guide, there’s something inevitable taking place here. Both Stalin and Mao, whose portraits hang at every party meeting of Nepali Maoists, spent their final years in constant fear for their lives, plagued by paranoia and suspicion. That’s something our Maoists have to look forward to: the restless ghosts of 17,000 dead are sure to haunt them.

Meanwhile back on the streets, the innocence and trust Nepali society lost to the war may never be fully regained, but the inherent right of law abiding citizens to live without fear is already well on its way to being restored. Jai Nepal. 🇳🇵



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Getting away

QUACK: (Clockwise from above, left) Yeshe Lodoe Lama examining a patient in Humla in 2010, and people lining up for free checkups at the Citta Hospital in Simikot built with American charity money.

The expose in Nepali Times in May 2013 first brought out Lama's fraud in the open.

A letter from the Banaras Hindu University, stating that Lama's doctor certificate was fake.

Lama (in centre with stethoscope) posing with other staff at Citta Nepal Medical Centre in 2010.



The Supreme Court has released on light bail a fake doctor charged with embezzling millions meant for upgrading medical care in Humla

BHRIKUTI RAI

Almost six months after the Kathmandu District Court ordered the arrest of fake doctor Yeshe Lodoe Lama in connection with financial irregularities at a hospital in Humla supported by an American charity, the Supreme Court released him on a Rs 1 million bail on 4 March.

The decision by a joint bench led by Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah himself and Justice Jagdish Sharma Poudel overturned earlier rulings of the district and appellate courts and granted Lama bail citing 'present available evidence do not show that he is at fault'.

Lama's medical certificate was found to be fake, and he had been in judicial custody since September 2014 after the Kathmandu CDO found him guilty of embezzlement of Rs 70 million in grants from overseas



donors for the Humla hospital, and for submitting fraudulent documents to the courts.

Lama's attempt to buy his release failed the first time. According to one official involved in the investigation, Lama had offered Rs 20 million to stop the probe at the DAO last year. He had such close ties with the officials there that he managed to escape from custody after being tipped off about the possibility of arrest.

Chief District Officer at the time, Basantaraj Gautam, threatened officials that if they couldn't bring back Lama they would lose their jobs. Sure enough, an hour later the police presented Lama at the office.

Yeshe then tried to accuse his American supporter, Michael Daube of Citta USA, of stealing from him and presented a receipt to

prove that Daube had asked him to withdraw Rs 34 million. The investigation later found that the signature and the documents were fraudulent, which turned out to be the strongest evidence against Lama in the case.

"How could this even happen," Daube asked in a Skype interview after hearing of Lama's release. Daube, who is a New York-based artist and philanthropist, lodged a complaint against Lama at the DAO in Kathmandu for misappropriation of funds which then ordered that Citta Nepal's bank accounts be frozen. Although Lama submitted audit reports, Daube says they were neither timely nor transparent. Even the land for the complex in Simikot with a modern 15-bed hospital equipped with an operation theatre and special



emergency wards, was registered in the name of Lama's father, Tsering Lama.

Legal experts find it odd that Chief Justice Shah and Justice Poudel decided to grant Lama minimum bail despite overwhelming evidence of fraud and malfeasance. Chief Justices don't usually take up cases like these in their own bench unless there are serious constitutional or legal issues involved, they add.

Chief Justice Shah retires in July and his 4 March verdict states: 'If new evidence surfaces later then the case will move

ahead accordingly.' These words paved way for Lama's bail. A retired Supreme Court Justice who did not want to be identified told us that given the extensive body of evidence already against Lama, the order to release him was highly questionable.

In a similar case, the Supreme Court in 2010 ordered that the property of the charitable organisation Buddha Foundation Pokhara Nepal couldn't be transferred to a private company. (See box. overleaf)

Rumours of financial irregularities and mismanagement of funds had been swirling ever since Lama appointed family members and relatives on the board of Citta Nepal and registered the hospital property in his father'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 nearly \$90,000 until funding was stopped in mid-2012.

Volunteers over the years had raised concerns over Lama's medical qualifications, but Citta USA did not act on those early red flags. Then in the summer of 2012 a Spanish volunteer doctor at Citta tipped off Daube. "Lama knew nothing about medicine and surgery," recalled Marta Faig, a Spanish physician who was conducting a health camp at Citta.

Since Lama was registered as a medical doctor at the Nepal Medical Council (Licence Number 4734), Daube did not

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feel it was necessary to verify his credentials. But after complaints, Banaras Hindu University confirmed that his doctor's certificate was fake.

Daube first met Lama in 1997 at a monastery in Sarnath, India where Lama was studying traditional medicine. In a district with health indicators much worse than the rest of the country and decrepit government hospitals, it was all too easy for Lama to convince the well-meaning American to invest. Lama registered Citta Nepal as an NGO on 21 July 2003 at the Kathmandu DAO.

Daube now admits he was duped. "All these years I thought I was helping a young doctor who sacrificed a lucrative medical career in the city to improve the health of fellow Humlis," he said.

Lama has since changed the name of the hospital to HEED Nepal with Lama serving as Chair. Yeshe didn't reply to our emails and phone calls. Since the apex court granted Lama bail, legal experts fear it could mean that a lower district court could hand him a lenient sentence.

Said Daube: "Seems like Yeshe Lodoe Lama is trying to buy time, my only hope is that due diligence will be done to put him in jail so that health care can finally flourish for that impoverished region." 🇳🇵

Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal @cijnepal

nepalitimes.com
 ■ Doctor who?, #655
 ■ Watch trailer of Way of Life, documentary based on Michael Daube's life

Bar-bench tussle

Nepal's Supreme Court and the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) have been on a collision course after a recent NBA assembly in Chitwan highlighted corruption in the judiciary, and called for action against rogue judges.

This is the first time the NBA has been so outspoken, and Chair Hari Krishna Karki (pic, below) said: "In the past we've only used words like 'malpractice' and 'wrongdoing', now we're calling a spade a spade and saying it is corruption in the judiciary."

Chief Justice Ram Kumar Prasad Shah (pic, right) tried defending his institution by taking the unusual step of issuing a statement from his personal secretariat.

He asked the NBA to provide evidence of corruption if they had any. Nepal's constitution doesn't give the Chief Justice's secretariat authority to demand evidence of corruption of judges and to carry out investigation. That falls under the jurisdiction of the Judicial Council (also headed by the Chief Justice).

Says Karki: "The Chief Justice's statement implied that he would investigate after receiving evidence. So we told him that he didn't have the right to do so and would present the evidence if only the parliament and Judicial Council so demanded."

If the Supreme Court and the NBA are serious about tackling corruption in the judiciary, it will not just benefit the larger public and the people in Humla, but perhaps also make Chief Justices more accountable in future.



Fleecing donors


Citta's donors are not the only ones to be hoodwinked in Nepal. Japanese philanthropist Takaji Yamaguchi had been supporting Buddha Foundation in Pokhara to provide health services to the poor and needy. But when Dharmaraj Shrestha, a doctor who ran the foundation, tried to transfer the charity's property to a private company called Buddha Hospital and Research Centre Pvt Ltd, the case was taken to the Supreme Court.

In September 2010, the full bench of Supreme Court judges Khilraj Regmi, Sushila Karki and Prakash Wasti ruled that 'under no excuse can the financial support and health equipment received by Buddha Foundation Pokhara Nepal be used by Buddha Hospital and Research Centre which is established with a commercial motive'.

The Supreme Court's precedent on this case is the only ray of hope for reopening the Citta Nepal hospital in Humla (pic, left). The German charity Shanti Leprahilfe, which works for the rehabilitation of leprosy patients fell out with its Nepali partner at Shanti Sewa Griha over similar issues of management and fund use.

Nepali activists say naive foreign volunteers and donors are also partly to blame. "Foreigners are part of the problem," says Martin Punaks of Next Generation Nepal, which helps reintegrate rescued children with parents. "They need to vet Nepali partner organisations and monitor them for integrity more carefully."

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 ■ Out on a limb, #656




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Mr. Jayaraj Bajracharya (Artist) with his Art Work - Statue of Padmasambhava

Talks yield no results

Interview with Sadbhawana Party
Chair Rajendra Mahato,
BBC Nepali Service, 8 April



BBC: The 30-party opposition alliance cut short its three-day general strike despite your party's objection. Where do you stand now?

Rajendra Mahato: We should have thought it out before calling a three-day general strike. And we should not have called it off once we announced it. The strike's withdrawal has discouraged our cadre and deepened distrust among us. We will now hold discussions to decide how we can move forward.

Has it also raised questions over the 30-party alliance's unity?
I don't think so.

So, why is there a disagreement between your party and the UCPN (Maoist)-MJF (Democratic)?
We will try and work out our differences. We will hold discussions within the Madhesi Front to decide what we can do to carry out a strong political movement.

Wasn't this proof that you are incapable of carrying out a successful agitation?
Yes, I agree. The 30-party alliance cannot create pressure on the ruling parties in this way.

Is it true that there are cracks within the Madhesi Front and you have not been able to call a meeting of Madhesi leaders since January?
Meetings are called only when they are necessary. We formed the front to serve a specific purpose. If there are differences in our ways to achieve our goal, the front will not remain intact.

There are media reports that Madhesi leaders are not even on speaking terms. True?
It is not true. What is true is that we will be on the same platform only as long as we share the same goal and proceed to achieve it.

Despite so much distrust why are you still together?
We don't think the rift has grown that wide.

Can we say the 30-party alliance is on the verge of a split?
If we have weaknesses, we must correct them.

It seems that some opposition leaders, including yourself, are more desperate for a street protest? Why is it so?
It is pretty obvious that the way talks are being held, they will not yield any positive results. We have held talks for months. Yet, we have not moved an inch closer to an agreement. We just meet, chat and have tea and return home.

The largest member of the 30-party alliance, the UCPN (Maoist), has started talks with the NC-UML to reach an agreement before 13



April? Do you think that is possible?

I do not think so. The ruling coalition has not felt the heat of our agitation so far. Unless we pull off a strong street movement, they will not listen to us. After all, they have a majority in the Constituent Assembly. Why would they listen to our demands unless they are forced to?

So, what could be the way out?

We need a strong political movement to create pressure on the NC-UML. They want to use their numerical strength to write the new constitution and the only way to stop them is to carry out a strong street protest.

Is it not a democratic right to use numerical strength?

Numerical strength can be used to form the government or decide something in parliament, not to write the new constitution.

Are opposition parties fueling the Gaur unrest?

The Gaur unrest is a conspiracy. The NC and the UML do not want to institutionalise federalism. So, they are expanding service centres at a time when the country needs restructuring. It is a good idea to expand service centres. But, why does the government expand them only along the East-West highway? The locals of Gaur fear that it is a ploy to shift the district headquarters.



Give us petrol.
Give us matches.
Give us support.

सेतोपाटी

Rajesh KC in *setopati.com*, 7 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“The Madhesi Front must carry out an independent and non-violent agitation to ensure rights of Madhesi people through Constituent Assembly.”

Sadbhawana Party leader Sarita Giri,
nagariknews.com, 8 April



PICS: SUJAN DHUNGANA

‘COLLATERAL DAMAGE’

Nagarik, 8 April

नागरिक

Amongst the dozens of vehicles vandalised by Maoist strike enforcers on Tuesday was a scooter belonging to a young mother of two at Chabahil. Despite the presence of security personnel in the area, protestors smashed the scooter and verbally abused the woman. The mother was in tears, and her traumatised children, aged eight and five, also began to cry. The Police managed to rescue her and the children, and whisked them away to safety.

Madhav Dhungel in Annapurna Post, 4 April

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

On 28 August 2003, Asta Raj Bajracharya, a member of Maoist-affiliated Newa Mukti Morcha, was detained by the Army. He was kept at the infamous Bhairabnath Battalion base in Kathmandu for two months before being moved to the Rajdal Battalion in Jawalakhel, where he spent another five months in detention. He was released after that.

But, even so, the coppersmith from Patan was included in the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2003 list of Missing Persons as 'Disappeared #5'.

"I asked them why my name was included when I am alive and free, and the UN staff were shocked," says Bajracharya recalling his visit to OHCHR in Chhauni when the list came out. Scared that the Army would come for him, the OHCHR sheltered him in the Baluwater house of a senior British diplomat named 'John'.

For Bajracharya, the time spent in hiding proved to be almost as difficult as the Army detention. He was allowed only one visitor. "Although the kitchen was fully stocked, I couldn't cook a meal because I didn't know how to use the appliances there," he recalls. "I asked OHCHR to take me away because I couldn't eat or sleep."

But the UN told him to stay put. They offered to send him abroad, but he refused saying he did not want to abandon his party. A case was filed at the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) on his behalf, and after nine days in hiding, he was taken by the OHCHR and NBA to the Rajdal



ANNAPURNA POST

DISAPPEARED #5

Barracks. Following a meeting with an Army major, he was assured that he would be left alone and allowed to go home. "The OHCHR knew they had made a mistake," Bajracharya recalls.

Three others among the 49 people listed as 'disappeared' by the OHCHR in 2003 were later found to be safe. Bal Krishna Shrestha of Lamjung is abroad while Nirmala Bhandari and Janak Kunwar of Nuwakot were living at home.

While at Bhairabnath, Bajracharya's hands and feet were tied, and he was physically and mentally tortured. "They often put us in trucks and told us they were taking us away for execution, and they told us they'd also kill our families," he recalls.

At Rajdal Barracks, Bajracharya and other prisoners were treated slightly better before they were released. However, his

wife Nishova remembers that he had a thick beard and was just a skeleton when he came home. "He didn't look human at all," she remembers.

Bajracharya is no longer associated with any of the five factions of the Maoist party, and says although he gets phone calls to rejoin, he feels let down by a party that had promised a better future for members like him. He is especially outraged by the party executing his comrade, Nawaraj BK, on trumped up charges. Bajracharya's anger runs so deep that he actively campaigned against his own party in the 2013 elections.

"The party murdered my friend, Nawaraj BK, accusing him of financial irregularities. Shouldn't the same be done to the Maoist leaders? From where did Prachanda get all the money to live like a king?" he asks.

Alive and well

Editorial, Annapurna Post, 6 April

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Out of the 49 people on a Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Missing Persons list, Annapurna Post has tracked down several people, including Asta Raj Bajracharya. They are alive and well.

Under no circumstances whether during the war or otherwise, should a citizen's rights be trampled upon. Violations should be investigated, perpetrators punished and victims compensated. It is expected that the Commission to Investigate Forced Disappearances and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would create an objective and fear-free environment for peace and justice. But it is clear from Bajracharya's case that the United Nations and foreign embassies were actively involved in defaming the government and the Nepal army. The government should hold the UN and other diplomatic agencies accountable.



The OHCHR's decision not to update its list even after Bajracharya was found to have not been disappeared and the British Embassy's complicity makes the intentions of both institutions clear. Instead of updating the list, the UN wanted to create the illusion of his disappearance by sending him abroad.

Now that the cat is out of the bag, it is up to the government to belatedly ask both the OHCHR and the British Embassy for an explanation of their wartime roles.

Junketing officials

Sujit Mahat in Kantipur, 7 April

कान्तिपुर

■ Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat recently took an all expenses paid trip to Australia to inaugurate a Global IME bank branch.

■ Tourism Minister Deepak Amatya went on a two-week trip to Hong Kong and China with UML leader Jhala Nath Khanal ostensibly to evaluate the route for the new Nepal Airlines Airbus. There are rumours the real reason is to discuss financials of the new regional Pokhara Airport being build with a Chinese Exim Bank loan.

■ Water Resource Minister Radha Gyawali flew off on Wednesday to France on a 10-day trip paid for by the French contractor for



TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

the Budi Gandaki Project. This is her eighth foreign trip since she became minister last year. She hasn't even informed the Nepal Electricity Authority about her trip. While all this junketeering is going on the

Prime Minister's Office is drafting rules governing foreign trips for officials. The committee is against the Prime Minister, ministers and other high ranking officials from taking trips abroad paid by private

companies, commission agents, donor agencies and NGOs.

"The Finance Minister going on a trip paid by a private company is a clear case of conflict of interest," one official said.

Kathmandu-based embassies now routinely nominate their candidate for trips and trainings abroad so their bosses aren't tempted to take the trip themselves. The American Embassy recently nominated Yam Kumari Khatriwada, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, for a security training in Hawaii.

The official said this is also not a good trend: "If this is not stopped, Nepali officials will be beholden to foreign embassies."

Cabinet secretary Prem Kumar Rai is in the committee drawing up the rules on foreign trips which will be based on a 2013 criteria to only send specialists for conferences and trips, and not random people. Senior officials were supposed to be barred from observation trips. A

secretary and the minister from the same ministry cannot go on a trip at the same time. A minister can have only three people and a secretary up to two people in their entourage. A high ranking official cannot spend more than 50 days a year on foreign visits.

Although Nepal only gets five yearly passes for UN General Assembly, records show that up to 48 people have gone to New York to attend it. The smallest team had 17 members led by Khil Raj Regmi. An official at the Prime Minister's Office says: "Since the UN GA falls around Dasain, most officials go there to visit children and relatives in the US."

There have been national embarrassments like the secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology who went to a workshop in Macau as member of a team of someone junior to him. Ministers have gone on trips meant for joint secretaries. Joint secretary Sharad Kumar Bhattarai of the Home Ministry even went for a training for firefighters in Japan.

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Entrance Date: 6th Baishakh 2072

Venue: Kathmandu University School Of Management (KUSOM), Balkumari, Lalitpur

Time: 11:00 am

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Building a better Mao's trap

You know a country is starting its long slide downhill when revolutionaries can't even shut the country down properly anymore. Where is the ruthlessness and nastiness that the ex-gorillas showed when they were fighting for our liberation in the jungles?

Today, we Nepalis are forced to be underwhelmed by a feeling of nostalgia for the glory days when the Mao Baddies could blockade the capital for weeks on end, bring the royal regime down to its knees and make the people quake with fear. Where is that can-do attitude to further the revolution by purging the bourgeoisie and working for the downfall of running dog capitalists and their imperialist henchmen and henchwomen?

The comrades followed Mao Zedong by the book in those days, taking very seriously his famous dictum that "you can't make an omelet without first counting the chickens before they are hatched". No revolution can be brought to its logical conclusion without the sayings of the Great Helmsperson, which is why the comrades took very seriously other Mao diktats as follows:

- "A revolution is not a dinner party, it is an orgy"
- "Political power flows out of the barrel of whiskey"
- "War is politics with the bloodshed of the toiling masses"
- "Let a hundred flowers bloom before we pluck them"
- "The people are the sea and the revolutionaries are fishy"
- "The party can't advance without making mistakes, and we intend to make many more of them"
- "All reactionaries are paper tigers which have aphrodisiac properties"
- "With the People's Army, the people have nothing."
- "A thousand mile journey begins with the first national shutdown."

It grieves me to say this, but the Dash Baddies seem to have forgotten all these wise sayings. Mao must be turning in his Maosoleum and shaking his head looking at how we have abandoned the Great Leap Forward into the Deep Abyss as his Nepali protégés organise half-assed bunds like the one on Tuesday. This is giving Nepal a bad name, once known in the 1990s as the Hartal Haven of the Subcontinent. Perhaps the Dash and Cash need to pick the brains of eh-maleys and kangresis about how they organised seriously strict bunds back in their hoary days.

But all is not lost. There is still time for the comrades to try to make a better Mao's trap. Just to show how it is

done, the Ass would like to declare New Year's Day 14 April a model bund. There, I said it. Spread the word folks, and let's show our amateur revolutionaries-gone-soft just how to bring the country to a standstill like they really mean it. Here are some useful hints to prevent future bunds from turning into damp squids:

1. Cremating a stationary taxi on a remote section of the Ring Road is too half-hearted. The whole point about a bund is to spread terror, and the comrades in Banepa had the right idea by throwing a LPG cylinder into the fire on a street barricade on Tuesday morning. Boom.
2. Make sure the media is there to cover your terrorist act and disseminate pictures of petrol bombed buses. Otherwise what's the point, right?
3. Be proactive by stopping anything that moves. If taxis and buses aren't allowed why should bicycles, tricycles, perambulators? Some people are still defying bunds by taking helicopters to their destination, incinerate some choppers while you're at it.
4. Lightning Strike: Work stoppage without warning, doesn't strike the same place twice.
5. Lucky Strike: A strike which achieves its result as a result of a fluke and not because of the force of its logic.
6. General Strike: Work-to-rule by top army brass.
7. Three Strikes: Means you're out.
8. Transport Entrepreneurs Strike: Bus owners go on warpath burning buses to protest a transport strike. Only in #Nepal.
9. Gas Station Strike: If the government doesn't let us commit adulteration of diesel, we will close down our pumps indefinitely.
10. Pre-emptive Strike: Announcing your banda before someone else announces his banda, also known as 'The Early Worm Ends Up in the Bird's Gizzard'.
11. Relay-hunger Strike: Ingenious and non-violent way to get govt to meet your demands by skipping breakfast once every three days.
12. Hunger Strike: This is what a majority of Nepalis have been doing for the past few centuries.
13. Pen-down Strike: This column is henceforth terminated in defiance of the Essential Services Act since it is a damp squib.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Why did you call off the 3-day strike?



It was a revolutionary tactical move to...



...avoid being pushed to oblivion in the next elections.



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