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AT ALL OUR OUTLETS

Sunita BK was 6 months pregnant when the quake struck her Dalit village near Kerabari in Gorkha on 25 April. The baby was born in a shelter near her destroyed home. Sunita (*seen behind*) lets a relative take care of her first child. Help has come from volunteer groups, but not the government.

RUIN IN THE RAIN

BY SAHINA SHRESTHA

PAGE 17

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Watch interviews with survivors

JANA AŠENBRENNEROVA



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VOX POPULISM

The people do not want the new constitution to make anyone stateless or second-class citizens, and they want a better quality of life.

Even skeptics who had described the government’s public consultation on the draft constitution as a sham had to reluctantly admit that it went quite well. The Madhesi parties and the Hindu royalist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-N) rejected both the draft and the feedback exercise, and the breakway UCPN-M even forcibly shut down the country by indulging in arson to terrorise the people. However, the enthusiasm with which Nepalis from all walks of life took part, rain or shine, in the process proved the public’s acceptance of this part of constitution writing.

Suggestions range from the absurd to the sublime. But there is quite a chunk in the middle that is truly the voice of the people, and raises their concerns about development, decentralisation, citizenship, equality. Their message is clear: the draft is flawed, needs to be improved and the disgruntled Madhesi parties’ participation in the process is necessary. Now, the four main political parties behind the 16-point deal (which was actually an excuse for regime change post-earthquake) need to grasp this message and turn it into an opportunity to engage the parties who did not sign in on the 16-point agreement.

People from across the country have expressed their concerns mainly over demarcation of federal provinces, citizenship provisions, secularism, inclusion and form of governance.

No surprise, these were the very issues that had stalled the draft for six long years. Most of the worries are genuine. For example, a dubious sentence that ‘only those born in Nepal will get citizenship by descent’ has raised fears of statelessness among those Nepalis who live near the border and go to Indian hospitals to deliver babies. The provision that forces Nepali women to prove that their husbands are Nepali has also enraged many.

People have also reminded the political parties that they had pledged federalism with demarcation before the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, and promulgating the new constitution without names and boundaries of federal provinces will be violation of a Supreme Court (SC) order.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

So, the parties now need to agree on a fresh deal to name and demarcate federal provinces before passing the new constitution. That will not just be honouring the SC order but also ensuring that the disgruntled Madhesi and Janjatis are not left out. given that this was the sticking point for eight long years, a compromise will leave most (if not all) dissatisfied.

Meanwhile, the political parties also need to remind people that certain provisions, even though that were challenged during the feedback collection campaign, cannot be retracted. Secularism is one of these irreversible provisions. All parties that are now steering the constitution writing process had vowed to embrace federalism during the CA elections. Their electoral triumph was also an endorsement of secularism. Just because some parties and leaders have now been able to rally people for a Hindu state, the agenda of secularism cannot just be abandoned.

The real problem here is of semantics. A lot was lost in translating 'secularism' as '*dharma niripekchyata*' which in the mind of many devout Nepalis is an imported term that reeks of atheism and has the conotation of sanctioning conversion. A more neutral, but equally effective formulation, would be 'freedom of religion'.

Similarly, the fact that the NC is now the largest party in the CA is also an endorsement of its agenda, including that of the Westminster model of governance. While negotiating on a constitution deal, the UML, UCPN (M) and MJF (D) also agreed on the NC’s proposal. The current clamour for a directly elected Prime Minister is probably a result of the parties’ failure to convince people that the Westminster model is not the reason for chronic instability, and that it is an idea they themselves endorsed by voting for the NC in 2013.

Feedback is just feedback, as CA Chair Subhas Nembang likes to say, it is not the people’s verdict. People gave their verdict when they voted in 2013. It will be impractical to include all public feedback in the new constitution. But the parties must grasp the gist. And the gist is: Nepalis do not want the new constitution to make any one of them stateless or second-class citizens, and they want to ensure governance that improves their quality of life.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

EDITORIAL

So sad to see and hear, usual results in a developing country. The government can’t support greed, graft and improvement, so the first two get it all ('Made to jump through hoops', Editorial, #768). A developed country usually has sufficient funds so the greed and graft still leave enough to run programs for the country.

Cindy Meyer

GET IT OVER ALREADY

Nepali Netas belong to the past, to the dark ages.('Get it over already' Bidushi Dhungel, #768). They do not have any clue about economic development or job creation. And this is why they always come with policies that are harmful to Nepalis. Mr Pandit, take a lesson in free enterprise, then you can appreciate people that work hard to support Nepal. Having a GC/PR provides us a chance to earn money honestly, unlike the Netas who just steal it.

Babu Magar

The Nepali people have to have the guts to say 'no' to the big three political parties.

Abishek B

All the smart people have left, gone to greener pastures in the US, or UK or Australia. What we are left with

in Nepal are idiots, even the ones that claim to be PhDs. We have allowed monkeys to be our leaders.

Ajay Rana

LET’S MOVE ON

With your Kathmandu centric vision, it may be quite easy for you to say: 'let's move on' ('Let's move on, Damakanta Jayshi, #768). That is a horrible and a despicable form of thinking and thought process. The oppression of the Madhes will not allow the corrupt politicians of Kathmandu to move on. The perpetual gender bias and the outright exclusion of women will not allow them to move on. The people without homes and jobs and with empty bellies will not allow them to move on. Violence against Women (VAW) and trafficking of women will not allow them to move on. The corrupt political machinery must first be dismantled before we can move on. It may happen in a year or years, but you can bet your house that Nepalis will stand up and fight for what rightfully belongs to them. I do not think that people are quite yet ready to move on.

Govinda Mishra

This draft is against women and their rights. What is the punishment for men who traffic Nepali women into brothels? Will these criminals that sell our sisters be punished? What do KP

Oli or Sushil Koirala think about this horrible crime? Is there a reporter that can ask them this question? Nepal is going downhill. If the Netas cannot or will not protect our women, what can we really expect from these horrible people. We can expect nothing, only a big zero.

Nirmala Basnyat

RESCUE AND RELIEF

The article ('Blazing new trails in the monsoon', #768) is not clear if the international mountaineers in the Hillary Relief Collective are voluntarily running the Remote Access Operations for WFP or are they getting paid? Also doesn't Nepal have enough Nepali mountaineers who need work now?

Simon Matthews

FEMALE REFUGEES

There was talk sometime ago that the earthquake will lead to Nepalis coming back. I was doubtful about that thesis then. This story ('Female refugees of Nepal's earthquake', by Karma Gurung #768) just proves that migration will increase, not decrease. People go where the money is. If aid and government assistance is not forthcoming, where will Nepalis go to earn money?

Nam

ASS FOR NATIONAL ANIMAL

The pig would be a wonderful option

('Ass for national animal', Backside, #769). Its qualities resemble that of our politicians very accurately. It devours anything put in front of it leaving a mess afterwards. Filth and gluttony makes pigs like politicians.

Bairagi

Vultures for national animal to represent bureaucrats and politicians.

Guy

Kaag! We already have a day dedicated to them.

TR

How about buffalo? We can call that "Holy Buff".

Norkyel Tseten

Where is the option for Danfe, *Lophophorus impejanus*?

Pravaskar Parajuli

Dodo for National Bird.

A Nepali

The way things are going, the national bird is likely to be a cow.

@etbutterflies

How about Oxen for National Animal, which actually translates as "Goru".

Anil K Jha

Times

THIS WEEK



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Water in the sky by Kunda Dixit (7,292 reached)

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Water in the sky by Kunda Dixit (855 views)

Most commented

Ass for national animal by Ass (20 comments)

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #769

Q. Will the new constitution be promulgated by next month?

Total votes: 65

■ Yes: 15.38%

■ Maybe/ Maybe not: 29.23%

■ No 55.38: 12%

Weekly Internet Poll #770

To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Would you recommend tourists visit Nepal in autumn 2015?

Federalism, republicanism and secularism

Whatever the political compromise, Nepal's new constitution must stand on these three pillars of inclusive democracy

Last Tuesday, the controversial Hindu priest Kamalnayanacharya published an appeal in a mainstream Nepali paper calling on majority Hindus to launch a 'religious war' against secularism. A week later, Hindu groups continue to vandalise and obstruct life across the country, demanding that Nepal go back to being a theocratic state.



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

While the individual's religious freedom comes under the ambit of fundamental rights guaranteed in the draft constitution, there is no basis for questioning the provision of declaring Nepal a secular state. In a democracy, defining the character of the State as secular ensures its neutrality in religious affairs, essential to maintaining communal harmony. India, which has a larger Muslim population than Pakistan, chose to be a secular republic. Because of its secular constitution, the country's religious minorities are enjoying equal freedom, even under conservative right-wing governments.

The Sushil Koirala government's tacit support of religious extremists risks an escalation of tensions. Here in Sunsari, the local police was sympathetic to the protestors demanding a Hindu state. The fact that lawmakers have been repeating public concern for religious freedom in the ongoing CA deliberations is proof that they haven't done enough to convince their constituencies that a secular state can impartially protect and guarantee religious freedom for all. This has raised serious doubts about whether our own lawmakers fully appreciate the principle of secularism in a democracy, in the first place.

Last week's feedback-gathering campaign also saw bitter clashes in the Tarai districts where locals protested against the draft constitution and burnt copies. Cadres affiliated to Madhes-based parties obstructed the feedback gathering process. UML leader Madhav Nepal was attacked in Rautahat, while protesters hurled stones at UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fled the scene. Similarly, an unidentified group lobbed a petrol bomb at Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat's vehicle in Nuwakot.

These attacks are not acceptable, but they were expected. We were taking a dangerous gamble by trying to postpone federal demarcation in the draft constitution. Fed up with Kathmandu-centric politics



and development, people had decisively called for Nepal to be declared a federal state from the streets during the Madhes movement, a demand that was incorporated in the Interim Constitution 2007 after 56 people lost their lives.

The last CA was dissolved precisely because the parties could not agree upon the number and boundary of the provinces. So, when the draft was tabled in the CA three weeks ago proposing to postpone the demarcation of provinces, Madhes-based parties protested once again. The protests inside the CA resonated with the local mood here in the Tarai, as thousands took to the streets. A week later, the situation remains fluid.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has condemned police brutality during the crackdowns and instructed the government to take action against the guilty officers who used disproportionate force. The rights body has also taken exceptional note of serious flaws in the draft and submitted its written concern to the CA Chairman Subhas Nembang.

"We are worried that the draft has overlooked universal principles of human rights and our international commitments in some provisions including citizenship rights to women," Commissioner Mohana Ansari told me this week.

Article 12 on citizenship limits women from passing down

equal citizenship to their children. Similarly, article 24(2) allows the state to 'regulate' the media, a draconian clause that could be abused to suspend press freedom. Article 36(3) which guarantees right to free higher education for disabled and economically marginalised, has been limited by subjecting it to formulation of bylaws. There are similar limitations on the right to health, right to food, and rights of senior citizens, the homeless and the Dalits.

Nepal has already been embarrassed internationally for its mistreatment of refugees, so watering down fundamental rights could see the country plunge further in the global human rights index. "Fundamental rights must be stated clearly in the constitution because they come immediately into effect and the state cannot postpone them under any pretext," the NHRC says in its feedback to the CA.

There has been a deluge of such feedback in the past two weeks during the public consultation process. Still, hundreds of thousands of farmers reeling under a severe drought in the Tarai and those affected by the quake remained unaware of the proceedings. The best way to uphold their injured aspirations is by ensuring that Nepal's new constitution adopts an inclusive democratic character in letter and in spirit.

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Freeze it

EOL, the authorised distributor of Godrej appliances in Nepal, has launched the all-new Godrej Edge Digi hybrid refrigerator in the market. The Edge Digi comes equipped with technologically innovative features including automatic frost control. Available in a range of colours, the refrigerator is priced at Rs 35,390 for 190 litres.



Building tools



Auto-Electro-Mech Pvt Ltd, the authorized dealer for Terex Equipment in Nepal has opened a new office in Kathmandu. Customers can avail of the latest construction equipments, primarily Terex range of backhoes loaders, skid steer loaders and arial work platform.

Talk the talk

James Hogan, President and CEO of Etihad Airways addressed the future of global airline competition at the annual Global Business Travel Association Convention in Florida. He emphasized the importance of consumer choice and innovation as the fundamental drivers of competition.



Six in a row

Nabil Bank Limited has received the "Best Presented Annual Report(BPA)" award for the sixth time in a row. The bank received the honour under Banking Sector (Private and Public sector) category at a function organised by Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal.



CHINA DAILY

Emerging market

There is a lot Kathmandu can learn from up-and-coming Weifang in China



AYESHA SHAKYA

Even before the April 25 earthquake left Nepal's tourism sector in shambles, the total number of tourists visiting was already stagnant. Visitor numbers were decreasing since 2011 and the average duration of stay was getting shorter. Amidst the gloom, there was one demographic of people who had been arriving in Nepal in hordes: the Chinese.

This shift in China's position as the world's largest economy

is not just evident in Nepal but across the globe. Armed with enormous spending power, China's middle class is expanding beyond its first tier cities, which refer to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen or the "Big 4" to smaller, lesser known cities. Weifang, a prefecture-level city in Shandong province, is an example of that.

Situated in close proximity to coastal cities in a province which boasts the third highest GDP in the country, Weifang owes

its expansion to rapid industrial development and technological innovation. The city's high-tech industrial development zone, which ranks 25 out of 130, acts as a key production base for various sectors such as the automobile industry, information technology and 3D printing technology and all together had a combined industrial output value of 80.76 billion yuan in 2014.

Apart from being a commercial success, these high-tech zones provide employment opportunities, preventing locals from migrating to bigger cities in search of jobs. While Beijing may still be known as China's 'Silicon Valley', Weifang is definitely giving the capital a run for its money.

However, along with the innovation, Weifang still values its past and has a deep-seeded respect for its roots. Known as the 'kite capital of the world', stringed kites are an essential part of the culture, made more apparent by the many kite museums and kite workshops. Entire households from certain communities worked at kite workshops to produce high-quality kites to be supplied within China and to the rest of the world. The people of Weifang are proud of their heritage and celebrate it each year on April during the International Kite Festival. Apart from that, the government pays street artists to perform folk songs, dances and rituals at Qingzhou so that old customs are not easily forgotten.

As a landlocked prefecture-level city, Weifang does share a few similarities with Nepal. As a developing country with a rich past, Nepal needs to learn to innovate and look to the future while not letting go of its roots. For example, Kathmandu could also host kite-fighting festivals like the one in Nagarkot at Dasain, but perhaps in a bigger and more international way. By focusing on the technology and manufacturing, Weifang paved the way for more development and firmly put the city in the industrial map.

Although no tech hub, Kathmandu and other cities in Nepal can follow in a similar path and capitalise in the increasing number of tech startups here. Home-grown talent needs to be nurtured and the local economy needs to be rejuvenated.

Similar to how Weifang emphasises its traditional handicrafts and culture, Nepal too has many products that stand out globally. They just need to be refined and marketed properly. A heavy reliance on imports should be reduced and the focus needs to be narrowed down to local products. Ayesha Shakya

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Budgeting for energy self-reliance

SUJIT ACHARYA

There is a gross misconception which terms hydro, solar and other renewable energy developers as belonging to the so-called energy sector. Actually every citizen of Nepal and every Nepali home is a microcosm of the national energy infrastructure. What use is developing energy projects if they do not bring electricity to Nepali homes and make our country self-reliant?

From that perspective, the question arises: does this year's annual budget at all address the urgent energy needs of Nepalis? Sad to say, it did absolutely nothing. It did not take one single measure to bring more electricity into the homes of Nepalis. It did nothing to reduce the consumption of imported petroleum products, which form the biggest component of Nepal's imports and is a dependence that threatens our national security.

Instead, the Finance Minister wasted valuable taxpayers' money funding projects that will probably take 20 years to complete, neglecting the immediate energy crisis. Any budget that relies on increasing revenue from taxes on imports is one prepared by people with no basic understanding of national economic planning. To prevent this yearly calamity



from re-occurring, the Customs Department and the National Planning Commission should be kept out of budget planning.

One intelligent move in the budget would have been to bring down the duty on electric vehicles and electric cooking stoves to zero. This would have weaned Nepali families off gas and petrol, increased the demand for electricity and promoted domestic electricity generation. The Ministry Finance, obsessed as with revenue, would see a windfall of royalty from new power projects.

It would narrow Nepal's trade deficit with India as petroleum imports decline, thus reducing Nepal's political and economic dependence on the outside world. But our inept planners will never allow this to happen because they only look at short-term revenue generation from the duty on imported fossil-driven vehicles.



Did the Finance Minister announce any measures to reduce Nepal's trade deficit? No. Did he introduce any substantial programs to decrease imports? No. Did he offer incentives for electricity generated

Who in his right mind levies VAT on hydropower projects when a country is reeling under crippling power cuts? Answer: Nepal's Ministry of Finance.

and consumed within Nepal? No.

On the contrary, he allocated funds to build a petroleum pipeline from India to Nepal, thereby increasing the import of even more fuel, spending our foreign reserves and piling up our trade deficit. This year's diesel imports by Nepal Oil Corporation went up by 14 per cent and petrol, by 13 per cent. Energy self-sufficiency through renewables has now become Nepal's main national security need, and it has to be addressed immediately to protect Nepal's independence. Otherwise the sight of Nepali leaders trooping off to New Delhi every time they have to take a

major national decision will be even more frequent.

Which planner levies VAT on hydropower projects when the country is reeling under crippling power cuts and importing electricity? Answer: Nepal's Finance Ministry. Mr Finance Minister: the hydropower sector does not need subsidies, it just needs you to stop thinking like a Customs official. What was your logic behind providing incentives to polluting cement factories and not to hydropower developers? Those cement manufacturers will now get diesel-generated electricity at Rs 45 per unit. Cement consumers will pay more because the energy component of each bag of cement is so high.

The Ministry of Finance should do the energy sector and all Nepalis a big favour by waiving VAT on all power projects and announce zero duty for electric vehicles and cooking stoves. Private developers will rush in to generate the required power. All they need from the state are transmission lines. This will reduce the trade deficit and remove the chronic shortage of gas and fuel that occurs because of corrupt syndicates with political protection. A stronger, more self-reliant and more independent Nepal will then emerge.

Sujit Acharya is the Chairperson of the Energy Development Council.

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Federalism is a fait accompli. Now we have to make it work to raise living standards

AS IT HAPPENS
Om Astha Rai

BIKRAM R

However, the disgruntled Madhesi and Janajati parties must be engaged in the constitution-writing process. That is also a message sent by the people during the feedback collection this month. It could be that a fresh deal to supersede the 16-point agreement is now needed. Not dissolving the CA or restricting its role to that of the Legislative Parliament immediately after passing the new constitution might be one way to convince them. 🇳🇵

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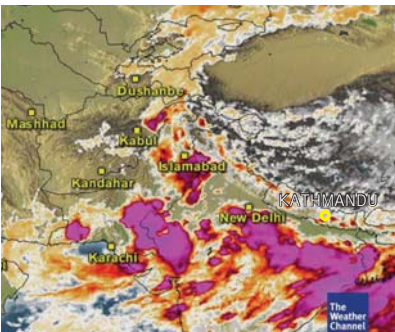
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The dreaded El Nino seems to be manifesting itself, as predicted. There is a drought over most of Nepal with rainfall only 60 per cent of normal in most places. The reason has been a monsoonal circulation that threatens to become a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal. That system has switched wind direction, pulling in dry, cooler air from the west. Expect the precipitation to pick up over the weekend, but not in the amount required.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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AMRIT AT O₂ ACADEMY

Two years after its gig at the Wembley Arena, Nepathya returns to London

PICS: SUDHIRA SHAH

STÉPHANE HUËT

While visiting London in 2007, Nepathya’s frontman Amrit Gurung had pointed out the Wembley Arena and told his daughter he wished he could play there one day. His daughter laughed at him. “Dreaming is free,” he remembers thinking.

But Gurung and Nepathya ended up performing at Wembley Arena in front of 10,000 fans in 2013. Two years later, the Nepali folk rock band is getting ready for a gig on 8 August at O₂ Academy Brixton which has a capacity of 4,500.

As last time, a large part of the audience will be Nepalis residing in Britain, many of them descendants of Gurkha soldiers in the British Army. This time, Gurung hopes there will be some Nepali veterans in the crowd because he will be performing the old Gurkha song *Naina Taala*, which is in Nepathya’s tenth album that is going to be released soon.

All the songs in the new album were recorded at one go, with all the instruments at the same time on one track so it will have



the feel of a live performance. “The sound quality of this tenth record may not be as good as the previous ones, but playing together at the same time enabled us to convey intimacy in our sound,” Gurung told us.

Nepathya band members are eager to meet the British public again, this time also to mark the 200th anniversary of diplomatic

relations between the two countries. Gurung says what he loves the most during his concerts is the interaction with the audience. “I’m not as enthusiastic about studio recordings,” he admits.

The second concert in London and this new approach of recording prove that 25 years after its creation by a group of college friends, and as band members come and go,

Gurung and Nepathya continue to innovate. Gurung says that is the way young Nepali musicians should engage in music: “To succeed, you have to create and recreate yourself and be original.”

In 2013, Gurung remembers being nervous before the Wembley Arena concert, but now he feels there was no reason to be. “It’s your performance that counts,” he says, “if the audience doesn’t feel your music, it doesn’t mean anything whether it’s in the Wembley Arena or anywhere else.”

Nepathya has performed to packed audiences all over Nepal, in Israel, in the Gulf, Hong Kong, South Korea, Finland and Australia in the past few years. Gurung admits that 25 years ago, he never felt the band would last as long as it has. Since then, he has worked with 19 different musicians and is the only founding member who remains.

Gurung says: “Dreaming is free, but hard work also pays off.” 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

■ Watch video of Nepathya at Wembley Arena

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HONDA

EVENTS



Inspire with pictures,
In celebration of the World Literacy Day The Non Formal Education Centre and UNESCO organised an open photography contest on the theme ‘Women’s Literacy’.
Deadline 25 August, pe.wong@unesco.org.

Lato Pahad,
Set in eastern Nepal, Lato Pahad is a tale of four porters and their struggle to make ends meet.
Directed by Kiran Chamling Rai and adapted by Yuvraj Ghimire.
Till 3 August, 5.15pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, (01)4469621, shilpeeheatre@gmail.com www.shilpee.org

Critical mass,
A monthly meet up of cyclists who go on a ride, their purpose: reclaim the streets.
31 July, 5.30PM, Basantapur Darbar Square

Run Nagarkot,
A fun 18km charity run to raise funds for rebuilding of quake-damaged Baluwapati

Secondary School in Kavre. Route will go from Nagarkot to Dhulikhel.
Rs 600 for Nepalis and Rs 800 for foreigners, 1 August, 7am to 11am, Nagarkot, 9851192617, for registration: www.ultratrailkathmandu.com

Nakhipot Urban XC,
A 4.35km trail race in Nakhipot, open to all.
Registration: 1 August, to 8 August, 7am, Nakhipot basketball court, 98020915 95, 9803661496

Earthbag Rebuild Nepal,
Workshops and discussion groups about the benefits of earthbag building and earthquake resistant design.
4 September, 10am – 5pm, The Summit Hotel, Sanepa.



Photo Kathmandu,
Photographers, curators, photo-based artists, historians, anthropologists and other practitioners invited to submit work and ideas for digital projection, discussions, performances on the theme ‘TIME’.
Deadline 15 September, www.photoktm.com



The Yeti Run,
Come out and test your strength, stamina and teamwork at Nepal’s first obstacle race.
26 September, St Xavier’s School, Godavari, 9841226397, pareshkshrestha@gmail.com

Reading, Writing, Pedagogy,
An intensive course for college students and graduates interested in facilitating literacy and arts with students, youth groups, teachers and adults inside and outside classroom settings.
Rs5,000, 5 August to 2 July, every Saturday 11.30am to 1.30pm and Wednesday 7am to 9am, Quixote’s Cove, Jawalakhel, (01)5536974, info@qcbookshop.com, www.qcbookshop.com

Get inspired,
United States Education Fund Nepal has guest speakers Aashwin Basnet and Sanju Koirala sharing their experiences regarding the US college application process.
3 August, 1.30pm to 2.30pm, USEF, Gyaneswar, Kathmandu, (01)4444779, (01)4444780, fulbcomm@fulbrightnepal.org.np

Monsoon story camp,
Journalists and community leaders are trained in communicating about climate change so people improve their agriculture production and be better prepared for adverse weather.
21 to 23 August, Patale Gaun, Kavre, storycycle@gmail.com

Wholeness,
A painting exhibition by Puran Khadka whose work is a meditative abstraction full of spiritual awakening.
Inauguration on 2 August at 5pm, till 30 October, Park Gallery, Pulchok, (01)5522307, contact@parkgallery.com.np

DINING

Coffee Escape,
In the heart of the city, the main highlights of this place are its Italian Illy coffee and pastas.
Lazimpat, Anand Bhawan, (01)4445447, 7.30am to 9.30pm

Capital Grill,
American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone’s taste.
Bhatbhateni, (01)4428426, grillcapital@gmail.com

Tasneem’s Kings Kitchen,
A charming restaurant proposing the unique flavours of distinctive Bohra Muslim food.
Jhamsikhel, 9801282727, (01) 2239532, tasneemskingskitchen@gmail.com

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MUSIC

Six years of music,
House of Music celebrates its 6th anniversary by introducing a new band, WHAT’S UP. 15% discount.
31 July, 7pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

Metal for Nepal,
A fund-raiser concert with metal bands for the beneficiary of the earthquake victims.
Rs 300, 15 August, 2pm, Club 25 Hours, Tangal, (01)4437486

Nepathya Live
Free passes at Bajaj showrooms in Kathmandu Valley
DAV School Ground Jawalakhel 1 August Saturday 5:30 pm

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Normally proud

In 2007 the Supreme Court of Nepal granted basic rights to sexual minorities and recognised third gender as a new category entitled to citizenship.

This is a legal statement, but it is still difficult for Nepal’s Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community to be fully accepted by society. As Saurav Jung Thapa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kathmandu points out in his foreword to the book *Pride Climbing Higher, Stories by LGBT People from Nepal* society lags behind laws.

This book was an initiative of Chad Frisbie, an American writing instructor who organised workshops for LGBT Nepalis in 2013. At the book launch last week, assistant editor Danny Coyle insisted on the importance of giving Nepalis the possibility to write their own stories. “Till now, there were only foreigners writing about these issues in Nepal,” he said.

The 12 stories collected in *Pride Climbing Higher* were written by Nepalis who left their home villages for Kathmandu – most of them because they couldn’t live with their sexuality and faced pressure from their families.

In the first story, Sita Phuyal brings out this problem: she is locked in a room and beaten up by her own family and flees from



OLA PERCZYNSKA

her hometown in Sunsari. Phuyal now has a job in the capital where she lives with her companion but regrets she has no family anymore.

Vishnu Adikhary was also beaten by his father and brothers because they didn’t accept his sexuality. But after he talked to media to explain his identity, his parents

apologised to him. They now accept him and encourage him for his work towards the minorities.

Sadhana KC’s family was helpful until she came out publicly, and the fear of social stigma set it. Still, some of the stories are optimistic. Jyoti Thapa writes she was depressed for years, fearing her parents’ reaction regarding her sexuality, but when she came out, her family supported her and encouraged her to become a role model in her village.

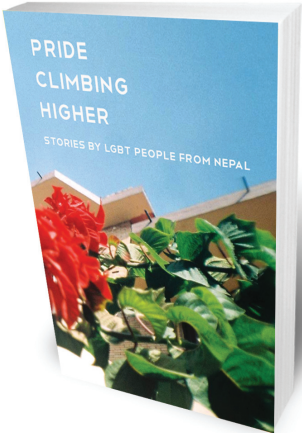
Pride Climbing Higher shows the importance of media in raising awareness and promoting tolerance. In most of stories, we feel the relatives of the writers had no clue about LGBT – Roshan Mahato points out that it’s already difficult to talk about sexuality in Nepali society. Sometimes the writers themselves didn’t understand their

sexuality and even questioned if they are ‘normal’. Mahato also writes: “People should know more about LGBTI identities.”

The book has also been translated into Nepali by La.Lit Mag with the financial assistance from the Norwegian Embassy and will be distributed through 53 regional offices of the Blue Diamond Society.

Manisha Dhakal, executive director of the LGBT rights organisation (*pictured, left*) said she believes this book will change the perception of the community in Nepal. She adds: “We also hope it will make our law makers more aware of the LGBT issues.”

Stéphane Huët



Pride Climbing Higher
Creative Nepal, 2015
Online: www.writing.creative-nepal.com
Price: free
154 p



One of the best-kept secrets about fine Italian dining in Kathmandu is the Al Fresco at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza. Perhaps because it is tucked away and not located in Lazimpat – few know about it. That is what makes it so special.

But even frequent diners there may not know that the restaurant has been around since 1997, located in the premises of an iconic hotel that is itself celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

Together with the Lucknow Moghul cuisine at Kakori next door, the restaurant is in the lower floor of the luxury villas built for SAARC Summits.

Al Fresco is offering a two-

week pizza and pasta promo till 7 August, and *Nepali Times* was invited to sample this “Italian gourmet tour”, as executive chef Yubaraj Pokhrel likes to call it. The ambience at lunchtime midweek was decidedly Mediterranean, since the monsoon had taken a break and the sun was out in all its glory shining down at the palm bush outside the window. Inside, the décor with copies of oil on canvas by the early Italian masters lend an authentic air. The waiters, dressed up to their nines in bow ties and white gloves give a touch of class and they engage the guest in informal pre-prandial banter about the choices, as is the custom in Italy.

Chef Pokhrel recommends the bread starters with olive and tomato dips that are on the piquant side and appealing to the Nepali taste buds. The minestrone is not like minestrone elsewhere in Kathmandu, that’s for sure -- the aroma of the herbs waft up even before the tongue gets a taste of it. All this is washed down with a very appropriate and refreshingly dry white Italian Chardonnay that is perfect for the Italian summer (and the Nepali monsoon).

Moving right along, the three courses arrive. Spaghetti con il Gambretti (Veneto) and, as expected, the pasta is just right in its oval platter. Not soggy like chowchow, and not too tough with just the proper hint of yellow. The right boil is the secret of great pasta, and Al Fresco has that small detail down pat. The shrimp is a perfect accompaniment to the spaghetti, the meat grilled to just the right texture, to be scooped out

Al Fresco

of the shell.

The Ravioli di spinaci con Noci (Abruzzi) came with a subtle ricotta and walnut tribute to the tastebuds. This reviewer will skip that item next time, though, since you could easily make it at home by adding cheese and spinach fillings into a veggie momo.

Into the second glass of Chardonnay, we are right in the mood to explore Al Fresco’s innovative international pizza list. In a globalised world, the variety on offer does justice to the diversity of world cuisine out there as toppings do to authentic Italian pizza.

One can’t go wrong with Neapolitana, and this one had an extra sour tang from capers and pearl onions in vinegar. We were curious, however, about the Himalayan Herb Pizza with its Nepali topping made of chicken bits, a blend of yak and mozzarella cheese, *timur*, and *til*. The end result is something that if you closed your eyes, you could be by the bay in Naples with your heart in Nepal. We suggested that Chef Pokhrel add *jimbu* to the



topping next time, and perhaps concoct a vegetarian topping for non-carnivores.

By the time the tiramisu (complimentary till 7 August with all meals) came around, we were singing hosannahs to the gods of gastronomy. You can tell the mascarpone here is the original stuff, the cream layers are laced with coffee liquor and the sponge cake has the unmistakable scent of amaretto.

We won’t give you prices of the items, suffice it to say that Al Fresco is not more expensive than some of the classier eateries in the city centre. You have another week to enjoy the pizza pasta promo.

Sunaina Rana

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THE TOWN OF PHARPING BETWEEN CLOUD AND FOREST

PHOTOGRAPHS by **KUNDA DIXIT**

Tourists are told not to visit Nepal in the monsoon. It is actually the best time to visit. To see water in the sky in the form of vapour. You may not get to look at mountains, but you can pass the days cloud-gazing. Towering white water vapour castles are etched against an indigo sky, their shapes changing with every passing moment. Dazzling and billowing, they are sometimes blinding white, sometimes heavy and dark, then glowing pastel in the slanting rays of the setting sun. The next morning, after a night of rain, the sky is covered by an upside down carpet. All the dust has been washed away, and the snow mountains appear, tantalisingly brief, close enough to touch.


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■ More pictures



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Having never read any Thomas Hardy, I went into the act of viewing this 119-minute-long film with a little bit of scepticism, knowing that very possibly this particular cinematic dramatisation of the muchloved

MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Thomas Hardy classic may not measure up, even though I am not really qualified to judge it against the original source material. Directed by the Danish filmmaker Thomas Vinterberg, who co-founded the somewhat infamous Dogme 95 movement (which advocates for a kind of

visceral cinematic reality) along with the now very famous Lars von Trier, Far From The Madding Crowd is clearly a very shortened version of an intricate novel that tells the story of the headstrong Bathsheba Everdene (Carey Mulligan) who goes from being a penniless girl to relative wealth when she inherits her uncle's farm. As the beautiful, spirited, but also slightly churlish Bathsheba sails through her new-found life, revelling in her ability to make decisions, and fighting the battles that any woman of the time would have to face head-on were one to become a "gentlewoman farmer" in the late 19th century (the novel was published in 1874), she catches the eyes of three very different, and extremely ardent suitors - though in the film version, even while Cary Mulligan is really quite lovely, no one can really fathom why she might

attract quite so much attention. This is partly because her two nicer admirers, Gabriel Oak (played by the Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts) and William Boldwood (the British actor Michael Sheen), are pretty much too good to be true, especially when contrasted to the poorly fleshed out Sergeant Frank Troy (Tom Sturridge) whom Bathsheba rather absurdly falls for, even while she declares, ridiculously and repeatedly, that no one can tame her. Clearly, condensing a long, complex novel into a barely two hour long film is not easy, and here it is clear that the screenplay written by David Nicholls, sacrifices a great many logical details for the sake of moving swiftly through the story.

As a result, Sergeant Troy and Bathsheba are relatively lightly sketched out, and Schoenaerts and Sheen are left to carry the relatively heavy weight of the film, a task that both of these veteran actors are imminently capable of. While it is a bit of shame that a novel written with a wom an as a central character in the 19th Century has been reduced to becoming a film about the integrity of the men in her life in a 21st Century film version, the presence of two great actors more than saves the film, making it worth watching due to its production value, and of course the suspense (for those who have not read the book) regarding who Bathsheba will ultimately end up with. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer 🎬

HAPPENINGS



BRIDGE COLLAPSE: More than 20,000 passengers were stranded on the East West Highway on Monday after this bridge collapsed in Gaidakot, Nawalparasi.



OLD AGAINST NEW: Taxi drivers halt traffic in Kathmandu on Wednesday protesting the government's decision to import of 500 more cabs.



DEBUT NOVEL: British Council Country Director Brendan McSharry, Regional Director Stephan Roman and professor Abhi Subedi launch Bikash Sangraula's (second from right) novel *Unlikely Storytellers* in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



PULLING DOWN THE CHARIOT: The Rato Machhindranath chariot, damaged by the April earthquake is now being dismantled before being rebuilt.



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT: Actor Neer Shah after receiving the 'Chalchitra Dirgha Sadhana Samman' award from President Ram Baran Yadav on Tuesday.

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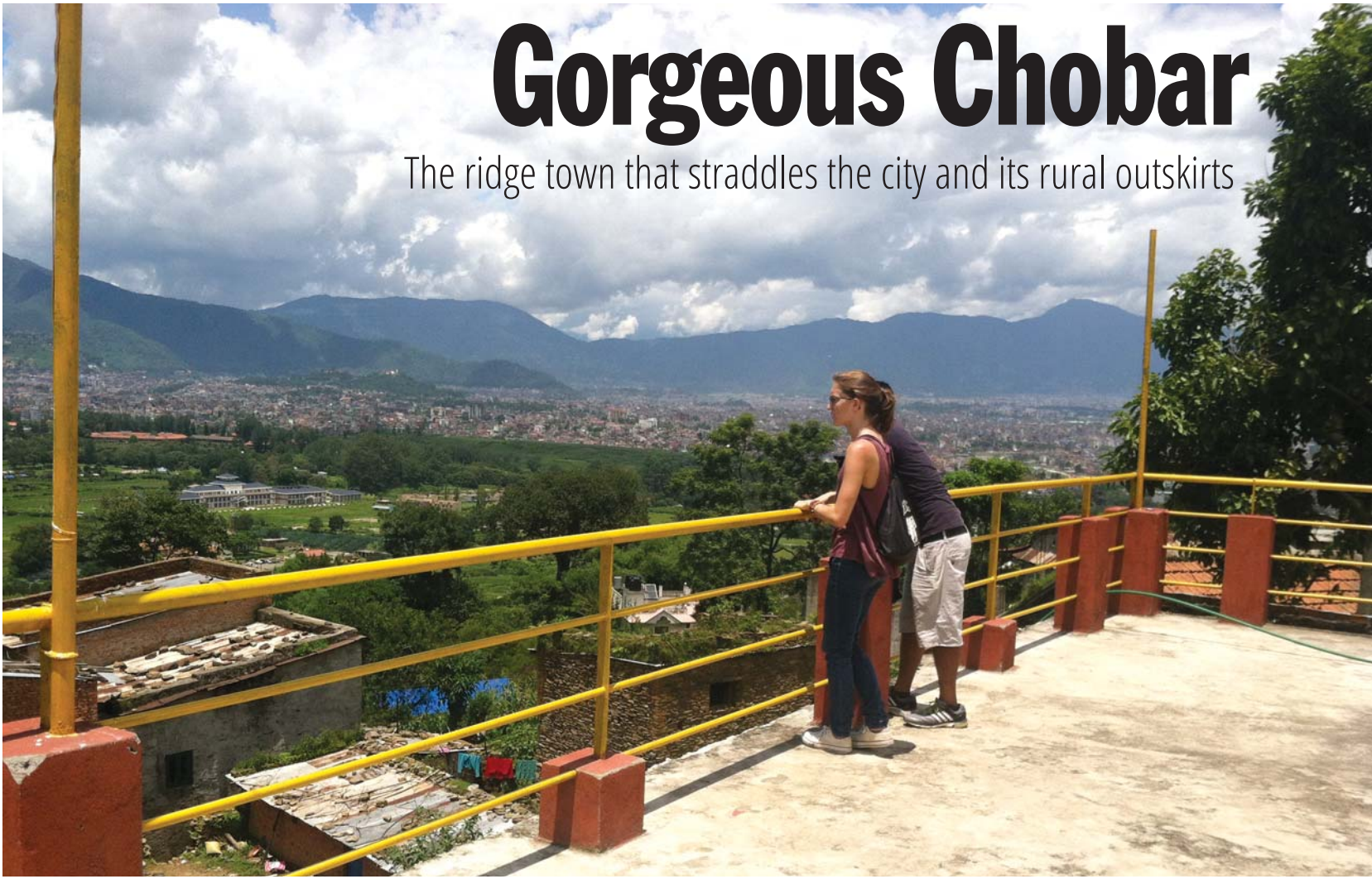
PEREGRINE FRISSELL

Life moves at a different pace in the sleepy town on the hill overlooking Kathmandu Valley. It is literally on the boundary between the hectic city and the bucolic farming villages to the south.

Chobar is so near, but get up here and within sight of Kathmandu you are in a different world. Cross the Ring Road from Jawalakhel and walk over the 100-year-old cast iron footbridge over the Bagmati, up the steep stone steps through a pine forest to the settlement on the ridge.

Nearby Kirtipur is similarly located, but Chobar is less densely-populated and has the air of a place that history and geography have passed by. While Kirtipur gets its fame from the fierce resistance its inhabitants put up to the invading army of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1770, Chobar is famous for the mythical story of Manjushree cutting the ridge in half to drain the lake that was once Kathmandu. The gorge with its rapids may not have its once-pristine quality, but is still dramatic.

The town takes up a good portion of the crest of the hill, and if you continue to ascend you'll



PICS: PEREGRINE FRISSELL



find its famous temple on which devotees have nailed metal plates and bowls to its walls to thank the deity for prayers answered.

Like everything else in Kathmandu, Chobar was also rocked by the 25 April earthquake and its aftershocks. The damage is minimal: one house near the entrance to the temple has half fallen, there are angled beams supporting the walls of the temple

and many homes have cracks. For most locals, however, life moves along at the same slow pace it did before.

Elderly men sit drinking tea near a new gumba that is under construction, the women are in the shade singing hymns. On a clear day you can see the whole Valley spread out below, the snow mountains beyond and even Mt Everest if there are no clouds.

Most young men have moved out for work. The families here say they only go into town once a week if they have to. The air is better up on the hill, and things are quieter too, there are dragonflies, wild flowers and expansive cloudscapes.

Chobar is a perfect half-day walk or bicycle ride for Kathmandu residents. Enjoy being so near and yet so far. 🇳🇵

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A rising Nepal

Laxmi Prasad Ngakhushi is a photojournalist who has covered Nepal in all its facets over the past decades. Noted for his nature photography, he won the WCN Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition in the 'Human Interaction with Nature' category in 2009.

After the earthquake Ngakhushi began a photographic exploration of how people dealt with nature's wrath. In his seventh solo exhibition, *Rising from the Rubble* at the Nepal Art Council till 2 August, he wanted to show the fortitude of the Nepali people after the 25 April earthquake. He said: "I hope my pictures will bring hope."

The 54 pictures show the moments before and after the earthquake, and most of the



GOPEN RAI

photographs of the aftermath were taken while on assignment for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which sponsored the exhibition.

"Laxmi accompanied us on field trips, and we felt the images convey an incredible message of

hope," said UNDP Country Director Renaud Meyer.

Rising from the Rubble shows pictures of people smiling amidst the ruins of homes, people going about their daily rituals despite the disruption to their lives brought by the disaster. There are many

pictures that are photographic proof of how communities came together to help each other. The picture of a candlelight vigil around a replica of Dharara made of hollow petrol drum in Sanepa, the one depicting locals helping each to clear the rubble are iconic images of the last three months.

The most dramatic images are those in which Ngakhushi displays panoramic pictures of the palace squares of Patan, Kathmandu (*picture*) and Bhaktapur before and after 25 April.

The images are taken from same spot and highlight the loss. Here, desolation somehow outweighs hope.

With such beautiful pictures, we wished the exhibition was displayed with a more narrative sequence. It seems the first level

is dedicated to photographs taken before the earthquake, but there is nothing to clearly indicate this. On the second floor, pictures of ruins lose their intensity as they are next to photographs apparently taken before 25 April. The captions need to answer the 4Ws and better interpret the pictures and magnify their impact.

Money from the sale of photographs will go to the Community Art Centre, an initiative by Artudio which organises art therapy workshops for children in affected areas.

The plan is to take the exhibition around Nepal. Said Meyer: "We want to give Laxmi's pictures more exposure to sensitise the people not affected by the earthquake. It is important that they know what their fellow citizens have endured." Stéphane Huët

Rising from the Rubble is on display at the Nepal Art Council till 2 August.

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Home-made froyo

Let's say your love handles are getting heftier, you can't keep away from the carbs, the doc has told you to lose 10 kg fast, but you can't keep away from ice cream. Conundrum.

If you are the type of person who must end a high-carb meal with an even-higher kiloton carbohydrate bomb of a triple scoop of butterscotch vanilla, salvation is at hand. You can now make frozen yoghurt, smoothies and sorbets, in the comfort of your kitchen.

Being endowed with a wide girth, Yantrick acquired a Cuisinart ICE-2 Frozen Yoghurt Maker and has since been indulging the sweet tooth without being riddled with guilt about the midriff. This is a cool machine in every sense of the word: simple, sturdy, easy-to-use, and you surprise yourself with the ease with which you can prepare creative desserts for your guests. And it's all over in



20 minutes from start to finish.

The way it works is this: a bowl with a special chemical inside is frozen beforehand in the deep freeze of your fridge. Since this substance is at below zero when it freezes, the yoghurt also freezes when it comes in contact with the sides of the bowl and is stirred by an electric motor unit.

The 2 stands for 2 litres which is an adequate volume for a family of six and you can easily serve a party with 10 guests, provided your desserts are so popular that they keep coming back to the kitchen for thirds and fourths.

To start, stick your freezer bowl into the coldest part of the deep freeze so that it is completely frozen. In fact, leave it there at all times so you can make your dessert immediately, otherwise it may take up to 10 hours to freeze over. You then insert

the freezer bowl into the makers base and immediately load the raw yoghurt. The fruit chunks and whatever else you want to embellish it with should be added only just before the end of the process. The yoghurt thickens and is magically frozen by the cold being transported from the freezer bowl.

The Yantrick, as you can tell, is bowled over by this yantra. There are a few downsides, the contraption seems to be needlessly noisy for something so small. Cuisinart should supply an optional silencer (joking). You also have to be careful not to leave the yoghurt churning on too long and sometimes there is a problem scraping the yoghurt out of the bowl with the spatula. And at 2,600 baht at a sale in Bangkok's Siam Centre, it is a steal. Someone should import these machines to Kathmandu and give the ice cream wallahs a run for their money.

YANTRICK's Verdict: A perfectly cool machine for the hot monsoon days that turns healthy yoghurt cheaply and quickly into a fabulous dessert. Even the kids won't ask for ice cream any more.

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-Dr. Spiro Condos, dentist practicing in the US

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The Shameless

Nepal’s leaders don’t know the meaning of shame and care about nothing but themselves

A recent conversation with a taxi driver got the Hand wondering if our political leaders have any idea how far they’ve fallen in the people’s eyes. The cabbie declared the



MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

only solution to the country’s many problems is to string up every politician from the lamp-posts around Ratna Park.

When asked if this wasn’t a bit harsh, he calmly assured us that’s what they deserve and pointed out he’s being fair by condemning leaders from all parties equally. This sounded reasonable compared to his opening statement and my next question was “are there enough lamp-posts?”

An extreme opinion, no doubt, but milder versions like “jail them all” are common currency, usually heard within moments of mentioning politics (or price rises, corruption, lack of electricity/ water, etc). If an alien outlander like the Hand has heard “Nepal is finished because of the netas” a thousand times have our insider leaders heard nothing? How thick is that constitutional bubble they’ve grown so comfortable in over 8 long years?

The MP’s ritual journey back to their ridings last week to collect feedback should serve as a wake-up call. Instead of being honoured by grateful



constituents, several top brass became targets for an astonishing array of projectiles. Madhav Kumar Nepal of the UML became the latest ex-PM to have a chair hurled at his head and bagged a new record of six vehicles vandalised (including his own) while a full scale riot broke out in his honor. Police fired live rounds in the air and unleashed dozens of tear gas canisters before the crowd was brought under control.

Prachanda’s arrival in Siraha, where he got elected by the thinnest of margins, was welcomed by black flags and verbal abuse. As if to break with a feudal past and honour the New Nepal that he waged a war to create, locals replaced the traditional/feudal showering of flower petals with a lively pelting of stones. Prachanda escaped unscathed while those around him got hurt (the story of his life) with several police injured while protecting Nepal’s man of the people from the people.

Not to be outdone, Congress

Finance Minister, Ram Sharan Mahat, fresh from issuing his new budget widely hailed as mediocre, was welcomed in his ancestral district of Nuwakot by a petrol bomb tossed at his car. Fortunately, nobody was hurt, and I like to think the perpetrator was only trying to make a point. Maybe somebody was upset because his PA got caught red-handed stealing metal sheets donated to earthquake victims.

At times your columnist marvels at the exciting era we live in, when age-old reactionary bourgeois customs are abandoned and new traditions begin before our very eyes. It appears the face-slaps delivered a few years ago to Prachanda and Jhalanath Khanal have taken root and blossomed into these new practices, already on their way to becoming time-honoured. Who needs marigold *malas* and incense of our pre-revolutionary past when you’ve got rocks and tear gas?

Though tempting, it’s impossible to condone such

behavior, despite the comic relief it provides. For the record, your correspondent believes harming anyone, including those who wrecked your country, is unacceptable, if only because it means lowering oneself to their level. That said, it’s also impossible to deny the intense frustration felt by millions at the collective failure of the political class.

As the MP’s scurried back to the capital we can hope their bubble burst, if briefly, before being restored by another round of meetings in 5-star comfort. Were they surprised by the hostility? Do they even admit to it? Have the years spent enriching themselves while pretending to write a constitution so addled their minds they don’t know everyone’s fed up? Is their collective divorce from reality permanent? Contagious?

As usual, we’re left with more questions than answers, but the fact our MP’s waited

to consult the people until the constitution was already so late there’s barely time to change anything was noticed by many. Only two days granted for 27 million citizens to express themselves after squandering eight years was too little too late and clearly indicative of the respect our leaders have for the citizens.

Despite the suspicion that it was all a charade, the turnout was impressive as thousands eagerly spoke their minds, offering suggestions in an admirable outburst of participation. Inevitably, the recommendations will be largely ignored, especially since cancelling ethnic federalism and the secular state, two of our Maoist netas’ main ‘achievements’, were among the most frequent demands.

In most democracies, citizens can shame their politicians into behaving themselves. For this to work, the leaders must live in the real world (at least part-time) where nobody is above the law, incompetence isn’t rewarded, and shame is something to be embarrassed about. Surrounded by fawning sycophants and armed security, our leaders wilfully insulate themselves from the people and their concerns; after these latest clashes with reality they’re unlikely to change anytime soon.

So where does that leave us? Perhaps the best answer came from another taxi-wallah, who patiently explained Nepal’s leaders don’t know the meaning of shame and care about nothing but themselves. Even when they realise they’ve betrayed and enraged the people, they continue doing the same thing they did before. 🇳🇵



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SARTHAK MANI SHARMA

At a meeting this week organised by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to review the effectiveness of its loans and grants to Nepal, the Manila-based institution's Director General Hun Kim couldn't hide his frustration about delays in project implementation. That concern is now also spreading to the speed and effectiveness of proposed assistance for earthquake reconstruction.

"We will suspend, even cancel loans now," Hun bluntly told the gathering. For proof of just how slow things are to get off the ground in Nepal, one needn't look beyond the Melamchi Water Supply Project. The project was first conceived three decades ago and has been under construction for 15 years. But only half of the 26 km tunnel to augment Kathmandu Valley's water supply has been completed. Progress in other ADB projects in hydropower, airports and highways is also slow with much of the allotted money still undisbursed.

The fear is that the same problems will plague reconstruction activities. After the Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction on 25 May, many expected the pledged \$4.4 billion to speed up earthquake rehabilitation and jump-start Nepal's stagnant economy.

But more than three months after the earthquake and a month after the conference, the Reconstruction Authority has not even been set up yet because of a dispute between the NC and the UML about who should get to head the reconstruction agency and who should replace the chief secretary when he retires (See page 18). The government presented an ambitious budget earlier this month, but there are no concrete plans in it to expedite spending.

To be sure, most countries show accelerated economic growth after a disaster because the construction boom ends up injecting cash into the economy. But for that to happen, the right policies have to be in place for job creation, providing incentives to investors and curbing corruption. Which is why the ADB's economic growth forecast has actually been lowered from 5.1 per cent to 4.5 per cent.

This year's budget has a 140 per cent increase from last year in planned capital spending, which is crucial to growth. However, because of corruption and chronic mismanagement, up to three-quarters of the development budget year after year remains unspent, and it has become a tradition that 60 percent of the budget is spent hastily in the last quarter of the fiscal year.

Chandan Sapkota, an economist at the ADB, says change is needed: "The usual way of doing business must end. Bureaucratic hassles, including a lack of coordination within and between ministries, must be dealt with. There must also be sufficient planning and readiness to implement projects."



Jump-starting the economy

... but strong leadership and an independent Reconstruction Authority needed first

Checklist for RECOVERY

(In order of priority)

- 1 **Appoint independent, non-political CEO of the Reconstruction Authority**
- 2 **Address bureaucratic and legal hassles delaying reconstruction**
- 3 **Show a true commitment for public-private partnership**
- 4 **Encourage investors with business-friendly policies**

Finance Secretary Suman Sharma says his ministry has made arrangements to ensure that the budget is fully utilised this year. "Those projects which have not started work until the second quarter will be ended, for example. The surrendered budget will be reallocated to other performing projects," he told Nepali Times.

The budget is just one challenge for the government. Managing inflation will be another critical test. Because of heightened investment activity, supply-side constraints and the government's plans to distribute cash grants to victims of the quake, inflation is expected to rise. This year, Nepal Rastra Bank plans to cap inflation at 8.5 per cent, an ambitious target. In recent years, the inflation rate has stayed above 8 per cent, and the only reason it was lower

than in the last fiscal year was because of plummeting oil prices.

Although some macroeconomic indicators are sound, trade and investment don't look promising. Even before the earthquake, exports experienced negative growth and imports were 11 times higher than exports. The current account surplus, almost singlehandedly sustained by remittances, will now decrease or even turn into a deficit mostly because of an increase in demand for construction material. Manufacturing has taken a hit, both because there is a shortage of labour and because there is reduced foreign demand. More than 20 hydropower projects have been damaged because of the quake, and this will add to the economic woes.

Few of the business-friendly policies presented in last year's budget have been implemented. The term 'socialism-oriented' economic model in the draft constitution has also spread disquiet among private investors.

However, the lessons from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand after the Asian tsunami 2004 prove that countries don't just recover from disasters but actually experience an economic boom. Says Kenichi Yokoyama, ADB's Nepal Country Director: "All that is required is a mix of strong leadership and concrete changes." 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

■ Lost decade-and-half, #767



PICS: GOPEN RAI



BUILDUP: Kamala Mijar (*above*) a daily wage earner couldn't even finish building a temporary shelter as the Rs 15,000 provided by the government was not enough to buy needed material.

Dev Kumari Mijar (*left*) stands in front of the remains of her two-storey house. The 56-year old says she cannot rebuild without outside help.



RUIN IN THE RAIN

Quake survivors hunker down amidst confusion about rebuilding grants

SAHINA SHRESTHA
in KAVRE

Looking down at the newly-declared municipality of Panchkhal from the Arniko Highway is a sight that has come to define the landscape of the 15 mountain districts affected by the earthquake three months ago. Hundreds of bright spots of light reflect the morning sun off new tin roofs of temporary shelters.

Just off the road in Ward 5 of Panchkhal, 56-year-old Dev Kumari Mijar has been living since April in a hut fabricated entirely of corrugated tin sheets. Her brick home nearby bears the scars of the earthquake and is too unsafe to live in.

"That is where I have been living since the earthquake," said Dev Kumari, pointing to her shed that has its roof and walls made of corrugated sheets. The Rs 15,000 that the government gave out was not enough, so she had to sell gold ornaments to buy another Rs 10,000 worth of tin. "I don't know if I can afford to rebuild my house," she said, adding she couldn't afford to tear it down either.

Kamala Majir, 29, finally received her Rs 15,000 last month after being given the runaround by local officials. But even that money is not enough to buy roof sheets and timber to build a temporary shelter. As a single mother of a 10-year-old daughter, Kamala cannot even afford to complete her unfinished shelter. Rebuilding her destroyed home is a distant dream.

"I barely save anything from what I earn. I have to send my daughter to school and manage the household," said Kamala, who started living alone after her husband took a new wife.

Up the hill, 80-year-old Bal Bhadra Majir hasn't received his Rs 15,000 because his name was not on the list of those made homeless. Wrinkled and gaunt, he lives in a bamboo and tin shelter, looking out at the ruin of what

used to be his house which he has no hope of rebuilding.

Kamala Majir sums up the dilemma of many here: "I had to borrow Rs 80,000 to build this bamboo and tin shelter. There is no way I can rebuild my house for another 3-4 years."

Everyone here has heard that the government has promised Rs 200,000 for those with damaged houses, but they have no idea where they can get the rest of the money. "It would be a great help if the government could hurry up with the grant," says Dev Kumari Majir, adding, "it would be a start."

There is a lot of confusion here, as elsewhere, about the mechanism for distributing housing grants. Some have been told the initial Rs 15,000 will be deducted from the larger sum, while rumours are rife that those who have started reconstruction will not get the money. This has led many to keep living in shelters even if they can afford to rebuild.

But in the absence of the Reconstruction Authority, the housing grants are in limbo and there is confusion even in various branches of government about how they will be distributed.

"We have already allocated the budget and the policy is in place," explained Ramsharan Pudasaini, spokesperson for Ministry of Finance, "but the guidelines and the standards for it are still being prepared."

Another official at the ministry said the money cannot be disbursed unless the Reconstruction Authority has been formed, but insisted that the full amount will be given out in installments and the Rs 15,000 will not be deducted from it. 📺



nepalitimes.com

Watch interviews with survivors



“I gave it all I had”

Interview with
Chief Secretary
Leela Mani Paudyal,
Himal Khabarpatrika,
26 July-1 August

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Himal: Are you happy with your tenure as Chief Secretary?

Leela Mani Paudyal: My motto in life is to lead by example, so I have always prioritised my work and fulfilled it to the best of my ability. Unlike the security forces, civil servants are not under the jurisdiction of a Chief Secretary. The position doesn't have power and resources. A Chief Secretary's job is to coordinate between agencies, conduct meetings of the council of ministers and act as a bridge between the government and the political parties. Another important role is to serve as secretary of the constitutional council.

Were you prepared for the job?
It wasn't decided that I would be

the Chief Secretary until the last moment. After I got appointed I made sure not to compromise on issues of corruption, public administration, and to be impartial and efficient.

Don't you think you could have done more?

For one year during my term we didn't have a parliament. Bombs went off to stop elections. It was a tough situation. I couldn't work everywhere, but I did the best I could with what I had.

How much political pressure was there?

There were a lot of pressure but I stood my ground. I had quite a few arguments with political leaders. The issues of public land as well as transfers got a lot of attention.

Instead of delegating, you did things yourself. Is it because you didn't have faith in others?

As I said before I believe in leading by example. Because a

lot of civil servants volunteered during the Clean Bagmati campaign, many others joined us. If I had just given orders this wouldn't have been possible.

Should a Chief Secretary be limited to policy-making or get feet dirty cleaning up rivers?


The country goes downhill when you say one thing and do another. Political leaders make the policy; a Chief Secretary alone cannot. For example: when the Civil Service Act to sack government employees possessing Diversity Visa (DV) and Permanent Residency (PR) of foreign countries was first taken to Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, the minister called it my agenda.

Are you saying the role of the Chief Secretary should be broader?

The Chief Secretary should be involved in hiring, promotion, and transfer of government officials and the transfer and promotion of security personnel.

Do you have a favourite successor?

No, those are just rumours. All candidates went through all the selection process. I have even overlapped with them, so they get exposure.



हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Bhanu Bhattarai in *Himal Khabarpatrika*,
26 July - 1 August 2015

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“People are displeased with the term 'secularism', so we will use some other term to mean religious freedom in the new constitution.**”**

UCPN (M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Nagarik , 27 July

How (not) to write the constitution

Jainendra Jeevan in *Kantipur*, 27 July

कान्तिपुर

- The draft constitution has some impractical fundamental rights. How can a state that can't even supply Cetamol or Jivanjal to villages ensure the right to employment?
- Ethnicity-based federalism is not a panacea for empowering the marginalised. Inclusion, reservation, positive discrimination and proportional representation are.
- There should be a threshold for political parties to enter parliament. Parties that do not secure at last three per cent of the total votes cast should not be recognised.
- Instead of translating secularism as

Dharma Nirapekshata, just spell it out as : “everyone will have the right to follow their own religion”.

- Instead of setting up a constitutional court, make the existing judiciary accountable to some authority without infringing on its autonomy to control corruption in the courts.
- Make provisions for amending the constitution more flexible so that it can adapt to the changing times and voices.
- In the preamble, not a single word has been mentioned to recognise the contribution made by our ancestors to keep Nepal independent and sovereign. But it does mention ‘armed conflict’, which Nepal is do not want to remember at all.



Tarai drought

Kantipur, 27 July

कान्तिपुर

BARA – Early July is paddy plantation time in the Tarai, but this year the rains have failed and the fields are dry. Rice that was planted are wilting in the sun. July is

almost over, and still there hasn't been any rain. Some farmers are watering their paddy fields with well water, but not everyone has irrigation facility. Some farmers have even been planting rice by buying water.

The situation is the same in the districts of the central

Tarai. According to District Agricultural Offices, more than half the farms have not yet been able to plant paddy. “There will be more problems if it does not rain within a week. There could be a food crisis,” says the Bara DAO. The Bagmati Irrigation Project did not provide the water on time, so the farmers have been left high and dry. They have provided water only this week, and for many it's too late. Many farmers, disappointed, are heading towards India for employment every one or two years rather than being able to plant rice. One of the farmers at the border said: “There is a drought. What can we do living here? We have to go to earn money.”



Sandeep Yogi in *Setopati*, 29 July

सेतोपाटी

I was heading towards Bhat Bhateni from Baluwatar on Monday afternoon. A motorcade suddenly overtook my motorcycle, halting the traffic in front of the office of the CIAA (Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority).

Motorists started honking furiously, but traffic policemen cordoned off the road. It turned out to be that the CIAA chief Lok Man Singh Karki was coming in to work. I was taking a few photos of the traffic jam and Karki's car with my mobile when a policeman snatched the phone from my hands.

A few minutes after Karki's motorcade

passed, everyone was allowed to move forward but not me. The police not only seized my bag, camera and mobile but also beat me up. They broke one of my teeth and the lens of my SLR camera. They informed the Kamal Pokhari police office about a suspect arrested with a bomb. Yes, they were talking about me!

When DSP Binod Silwal came from Kamal Pokhari, I told him that I was an Image Channel reporter. Silwal called the CIAA's press officer, who asked Image Channel's Chair RK Manandhar if he knew me. But Manandhar disowned me and denied any knowledge of me.

I called Federation of Nepalese Journalists (NFJ) President Mahendra Bista, who is News Editor at Image

Channel. I also informed Press Union Chair Badri Sigdel. They told the CIAA to let me go, which it did. But I felt humiliated not only by their behaviour but also by Manandhar's failure to protect me. When I wrote up the news, Image Channel spiked it.

On Tuesday, I went to work as usual. My colleague Anupa Shrestha, who is also the FNJ's Image Channel chapter President, told me to not come to the office from Wednesday. I asked why, she just said: “It's the management's decision.”

I asked her to hand me my termination letter, but she said that was not possible. I lost my job just because I took a photo of a public figure in a public place.

All in the mind

Exercise and yoga don't just keep you physically fit but help improve your emotional resilience

ANJANA RAJBHANDARY

I have started an exercise program, probably more times than the number of Prime Ministers we have had in Nepal since 2008. Starting to exercise is not hard, but continuing with it is the challenge.



ALL IN THE MIND
Anjana Rajbhandary

My latest effort, which I have somehow managed to keep up with in fits and starts is probably the smartest decision I have made. In June 2014, my motivation to exercise was the fear of moving back to Nepal and becoming the constant target of mean jabs from family members. Of course, with time, exercise became more important than just how I looked physically. Initially it helped me feel more

confident and improved my self esteem but it also helped me deal much better with stressful life situations. We have all heard of the many benefits of exercising such as a decrease in tension, and an improvement in alertness, concentration and overall cognitive function. Exercises also help one's general mood, we sleep better and improve our immunity. Basically exercise decreases the stress hormone called cortisol and increases the feel-good chemical endorphins in a person's body. Most people who have stuck with their exercise routine say it also helps them emotionally and in a way reboots their minds. People who have started to exercise for their heart have said it helps their brain as well. Now that the dust of the earthquake has settled with some random aftershocks, if you haven't started exercising this is probably the best time to start. Physical activities like cardio, even yoga can help improve your emotional resilience, the ability to deal with and handle crisis situations or stress. Emotional resilience is something one is born with but is something we can teach ourselves.

It will take time but the process is worth it in the long run. And exercise helps. An important aspect of emotional resilience is 'internal locus on control', the belief that you control your life and not the other way around. It is not possible to control what happens in life but we can control how we react to it. Western science has gradually come around to the Eastern thinking that the body and mind are linked. Practicing yoga reduces a person's stress level.

Yoga is literally taking over the world, as it is not just a form of exercise but a lifestyle change for many. Yoga is good for us because at the chemical level, it is known to reduce the cortisol level, lower your heart rate and blood pressure, reduce anxiety and give you an overall feeling of well-being. You may have noticed that your friends and family who are more physically active seem to be dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake better than your sedentary ones. Then earthquake changed the physical and mental outlook of Nepalis. I was working three jobs because staying busy was the best thing I could do for myself so I wasn't constantly disheartened by what had happened. No matter how busy I was, I made it a point to exercise for an hour about four times a week. They say you are never that busy, it's a matter of priorities. My mental health is my priority and the only way I knew how to help myself was by exercising. 🧘

UNION WITH THE UNIVERSE

Why are we interested in yoga only after it is 'discovered' by the West?

SHRISTHI SHRESTHA

Yoga means the union of self with the universe, and in the true sense is the dissolution of plurality into a singular medium of existence: a voyage into the void where everything we think we are, transforms into nothingness. Yoga is this unity of self with nothingness, the medium to initiate oneself into the world of ecstatic trance where matter dissolves into energy and becomes one with the greater truth of existentialism. Such a transition from material illusion to a state of pure 'shunya' or nothingness takes an immense amount of 'sadhana' or dedication under the guidance of a guru or a master. My guru is Adiyogi, the first yogi -- the outcast and the leader of the tribe, Shiva. He passed his knowledge to the seven rishis (Saptarishis) who were dedicated and patient enough to wait to be finally granted the secrets of yogic philosophy and enlightenment. Asanas, meditation, mantras, dance and mudras are the vehicles within yoga as a medium to unite with the divine. Through these Saptarishis, yoga diffused to other parts of the world. What we have in the subcontinent are the teachings of Agastya Muni, who introduced yoga not only as a philosophy and teaching but as life itself. These were handed down from one generation to the next through the culture of 'guru shishya' or master student. India, Nepal and Tibet have helped create a universal society for people from all over the world to be part of the school of yoga. New age yoga teachers have highlighted the benefits of yoga by stressing freedom from ailments and mental handicap caused by an unbalanced materialistic lifestyle. Yoga is now a household name as more and more people from different age groups and backgrounds practice it, but very few are progressing into the next realm through kundalini yoga. It is a pity that this great teaching has been so commercialised. As Yoga globalises, it is worrying that the real essence of the practice may be eroded. Teachers from various parts of the world are taking classes. In Nepal, we are losing our grasp on the roots of Yoga even though it commenced from our land. Very few Yoga teachers are studying the beautiful teachings from the Vedas and Patanjali that has the potential of changing the course of human civilisation. There are no workshops held by Nepali teachers, and I have met very few who can hold me in conversation about Adiyogi and the soul of yoga. Does it have to be that we are interested in yoga only when it has been 'discovered' by the western world?

In the land of Lord Pashupatinath, the lord of the lords and the ultimate Yoga guru, the place of the unity of Shiva and Shakti -- this is where the ultimate unison of masculine and feminine energies within ourselves should be a priceless revelation felt by all. Perhaps some of those who adopted Yoga as an exercise will finally some day evolve towards its essence not only as a form of mental and physical progression, but also as much more ascetic and universal sense of being. We can look forward to the day when yoga will not only be limited to studios and classes, but taken in as a lifestyle consumed with love, wellbeing and the ultimate knowledge. We should be proud of our roots and the embodiment of secret teachings from the past. We should be aware of what we are practicing and recognise it as the worship of one's body, soul and existence in its true sense. In the journey of self discovery, if one finds the true master or becomes one, it enriches the surrounding with the seeds of higher understanding. If you fail to find the guru outside yourself, close your eyes and you will find within you the ultimate Adi Guru who will take you down the path of self discovery through the medium of Yoga: towards divine unity, the core revelation of Yoga. 🧘

The Vipassana way

The meditation technique that holds the key to post-disaster recovery

ROOP JYOTI

One of the unseen and underestimated aftershocks of the 25 April earthquake was the psychological stress it had on individuals and families. As a teacher of Vipassana, I feel the meditation technique holds special importance to reduce stress and help us deal with disasters like this. After all, Vipassana means seeing things in a special way. In Buddhism, we have a word for the consequences of our own deeds: 'sankhara'. It is our own sankhara that brings about misery, suffering, dukkha. They are the cause of our fear, and our life ends when it has to end, and our sankhara determine the kind of death we will face. So, with or without an earthquake, it is our own sankhara that brings us misery, fear, and we die when we die, not earlier not later. If the things we do out of our own volition have such consequences we need to be careful when we carry out those deeds. Unwholesome deeds will bring misery and suffering sooner or later. We carry with us a huge stock of past deeds and at the appropriate time we may suffer the consequences to oneself or a dear one, or have an illness. One such life event could be an earthquake. Many people view events in life as fate or destiny, or something preordained. It doesn't need to be. With Vipassana we can rid ourselves of our sankharas, thus reducing the intensity of suffering. Whereas fate or destiny is viewed as something that cannot be changed, we can make good events happen in our life by performing wholesome deeds. As the Buddha said: *Keep away from all unwholesome deeds, accumulate wholesome deeds, and purify your mind.* The Buddha gave a sermon listing 38 proper deeds in Mangala Suttam. Some of them are relevant in the aftermath of the earthquake: avoid company of rumour-mongers or people who spread fear or who make unfounded predictions, do not

stay in damaged buildings, take care of your family and do not cause them anxiety, help fellow beings, there will be ups and downs in life but your mind must not tremble, etc. Fear is an impurity of the mind. The more the stock of fear we have within us, the fiercer is the fear when disaster strikes. Before Vipassana, we may think that the cause of fear is external, that someone did or did not do something, but actually the cause of fear is within us. It is not the earthquake that is the reason for our fear, it is our attachment to ourselves and our possessions. Through Vipassana, we can lessen our attachment and rid ourselves of fear. The Buddha said that life is like an arrow shot from a bow. It will fall when it has to fall. We all know that we have to die one day, we just don't know when. Vipassana students know that the state of mind is most important when one meets death. If our life has to end at a particular moment, it will end whether or not there is an earthquake. But if that is not the time when our life has to end, it will not end. The important thing is not to fear it when it comes. Dhamma must be translated into our daily lives. If we don't understand and accept that suffering, Dukkha is the result. It means we have not understood, and are not living a life of Dhamma. Ultimately, what is necessary is to maintain our equanimity at all times so that we are not affected by fear during natural calamities and other upheavals. May all those who lost their lives in the recent earthquake be reborn as human beings and attain liberation. May all those who suffered come in contact with Dhamma and emerge from misery. 🧘



Roop Jyoti is a PhD from Harvard University, is Vice-chairman of the Jyoti Group and a Vipassana meditation guru.



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Secularism, federalism and rheumatism

Despite the fact that Nepal was never under the colonial yolk and is frequently visited by natural calamities, it is heartening to note that our Great Leaders are constantly thinking about our welfare and trying to find ways to address our urgent day-to-day concerns about God Almighty.

Going by the number of column inches that have been devoted to the Omniscient Being in the past month, the number of tyres that have been burnt to terrorise people in 12 districts so they stop work and demand that Nepal be holier-than-thou, or the amount of saffron that has been imported from a certain large neighbouring country to the south which begins with the letter 'T', it is clear that we are the most god-fearing people on Earth. After all, Nepal's human population is now approaching the total number of gods and goddesses in the Pantheon (33 million at last count) and given the rate at which we are procreating, is expected to overtake the population of Heaven in another 7.5 years.

Since God is now such an important player in Nepali politics, *Nepali Times* approached the Celestial Creator for an exclusive interview in order that He shed light on some of the relevant issues of the day like secularism, federalism and rheumatism. God was forthright and forthcoming, answering questions directly



without beating around the burning bush. Excerpts:

NT: Mr God, sir, how many of you are there actually? Some say you are one, while others believe you are member of a divine jumbo cabinet.

God: Well, there is just me, my Dad and the Holy Ghost at the moment. Sometimes, when I find myself in times of trouble Mother Mary comes to me. But colleagues come and go in my office, so the number is not constant.

It must be very stressful administering paradise. Is this why you have let Nepal go down the tubes ever since it became secular?

Yes, and no. It is true that on any given day, I have to use my directly-elected executive powers to straighten things out not just in your universe, but in parallel universes as well. I am aware that things are drifting a bit in Nepal, and I have sent instructions to my emissary there, Shri Pashupati Nath, to do whatever he deems fit in the new constitution to make Nepal holy again. Just because @brb_laldhwoj doesn't believe I exist doesn't mean I don't. Oh, that's a great line, let me tweet that.

Is it true that those who support secularism will not go to Heaven when they die?

Totally off the record, yes. But I can't say that in public because, as God, I am supposed to love atheists as much as I love revanchists. But we have a full list of CA members who voted for secularism, and we will be barring them from the Pearly Gates when they breathe their last, or when they kick the bucket, whichever comes first. However, we will give them time to repent in a half-way house in purgatory until they see the divine light and admit that they have been misled by the damn commies, in which case we will give them a work permit to clean toilets at Heaven's Door. If they continue to renounce Me, they will burn in Hellfire for eternity.

Throughout the ages mankind has asked that if God is as compassionate as He makes himself out to be, how come he allows so much suffering in the temporal realm?

OMG, I was wondering when you'd ask me that because, even as Yahweh, I have no idea. ROFL.

And on a slightly personal note, are you a man or a woman, or both?

That is an insensitive sexist question. You're a Badmass.



The Ass

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

DIWAKAR CHETTRI

I don't understand... Why do women want equal citizenship rights?



Well, how about, for the very reasons that you men have been enjoying citizenship rights for all these years?



That went right over your head, didn't it?





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