Foundations of democracy

Babies born in 1997 when Nepal held its last local elections are already 18—the age when Nepalis become eligible to vote. This lack of local accountability has delayed earthquake relief and is a setback for rural development.

Early this month, the UML directed the government led by its own party leader K.P. Oli to hold local elections immediately. UML secretary Yogesh Bhartari said: “Rarely do we take a decision unilaterally but everyone agreed about early local elections.”

Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa of the RPP-N, who also heads the Ministry of Local Development, keeps harping on about the need for local elections. The main opposition NC, maybe more lukewarm, gives lip service for polls. So why isn’t it happening?

The Maoists and Madhesi parties are against VDC, DDC and municipality elections. The former because they think they will not win, and the Madhesi parties want boundaries of future Tarai provinces agreed upon first.

Rishi Raj Lumzelli of the Association of District Development Committees (ADDC) says it’s not just opposition from the Maoists and Madhesis that is the problem. “Actually, the UML and NC are not really interested because everyone benefits so much from the absence of elected officials.” Indeed, the Local Development Officers (LDOs) Chief District Officer (CDO) and the so-called ‘all-party mechanisms’ at the local level decide on billions worth of budgetary resources by themselves.

After the Sher Bahadur Deuba government dissolved municipality and village councils without new local elections in 2002, cartels of unselected local politicians make all decisions. Worried about misappropriation of local development budgets, the government declared these mechanisms illegal in 2011. Dor Mani Poudel of the Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) says, “An entire generation of Nepalis has never practiced democracy and good governance at the grassroots.” Poudel is also member of a commission recently formed by the government to redraw local boundaries within the new federal structure. He maintains this exercise shouldn’t stop local elections from taking place.

“Implementing federalism will take at least a few more years, we must hold local elections right away since the constitution allows local elections before federal provinces are set up,” he says.

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) Chief Sushil Gyawali is also worried that rebuilding is delayed by the absence of elected local councils. He said in a recent interview, “If it is not possible to hold local elections in all 75 districts, let us at least do it in the 14 quake-affected districts.”

BHAKTAPUR’S DEAR LEADER
BY SELUKI LEE
PAGE 14-15

AFTER THE AFTERSHOCKS
PAGE 8-9
Nepal has not held local government elections since 1997. It has been a decade-and-a-half since the last elected district, village and municipality councils were dissolved. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal has been run by unelected bureaucrats at the grassroots for the past 15 years.

In the early 1990s, Nepal was beginning to see the first signs of how local democracy could better deliver services in this rugged and predominantly-rural country. Backed by the Decentralisation and Self-Governance Act, local bodies were – for the first time in Nepal’s history – forced to be accountable, because they were elected. Development took off, with remarkable improvements in rural health care, school enrolment, community forestry, village-managed irrigation, and credit and savings schemes. It was largely due to decentralised decision-making that Nepal saw dramatic improvements in female literacy, which in turn sharply reduced both infant and maternal mortality rates. The momentum of the changes that swept rural Nepal is still being felt today in health and education.

The Maoist conflict was the ruse Nepali Congress prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba used to cancel local elections in 2002, when in fact he feared that the UML would once more dominate village and district councils. What he did not anticipate – or could not have cared less about – was that the Maoists would use the vacuum at the local level to spread their influence, which is exactly what happened. The rebels used terror tactics, threatening elected local councilors and killing those who refused to toe the line, they bombed most of the 4,000 VDC and 75 DDC buildings.

After the conflict ended, the presence of elected officials at the grassroots would have streamlined compensation for victims and their families. Local accountability would have also ensured more timely and efficient delivery of relief after last year’s earthquake. In the year after the earthquake we have seen CDCOs and LDOs in many of the 14 districts doing a commendable job with emergency response, but in the presence of elected local councils they would have performed even more effectively distributing reconstruction grants, rebuilding schools and repairing infrastructure.

National-level politicians are too busy bickering for power, or arguing about the new constitution, to pay attention to local elections. They spout the ‘federalism’ mantra, but they stopped practicing decentralisation long ago. Federalism is nothing more than self-governance and autonomy for local units of government, but Kathmandu today is more centralised than ever. Bureaucrats sent by Singha Darbar decide where to spend earthquake money or the development budget, even as politicians argue endlessly about the form of federalism and the boundaries of proposed provinces in the Tarai.

This young democratic republic is dysfunctional because of the lack of its basic tenets: periodic local elections, the rule of the majority and a vibrant opposition at the grassroots level. Currently, a junior civil servant with no ties to a province could take years, and it would be unwise to guess how long, to decide where to spend earthquake money or the development budget, even as politicians argue endlessly about the form of federalism and the boundaries of proposed provinces in the Tarai.

Those openly against local elections are the Maoists even though they promised polls in their 2013 election manifesto. Madhesi parties are understandably opposed to local elections saying local councils must be elected only after a final decision on the federal demarcation of Tarai districts.

However, it would be far too easy to shift the blame on the NC or the UML – it is in any particular hurry to hold local elections, because they benefit so much from the absence of grassroots accountability. Village and district councils are dominated by so-called ‘all-party mechanisms’ with representatives of all political parties in proportion to their parliamentary strength. VDC and DDC secretaries listen to these unelected local leaders, not to people’s representatives, when it comes to disbursement of budgeted resources. The government declared all-party mechanisms illegal a few years ago, but they still rule the roost.

The Supreme Court has twice ruled that local elections should be held. Finalising the boundaries of federal provinces could take years, and it would be unwise to wait so long for local elections. Under Article 303 of the new constitution, which deals with the political system of transition, there is no obstacle to holding local body elections. In Nepal, it has been a clear-cut case where there is no political will, there is no way.
Devil and deep blue sea

Nepalis learnt long ago they cannot rely on their government, and recent events have taught us we cannot rely on outsiders either.

People have lost their loved ones, their livelihoods, and homes. They have lost hope that things will improve. Every second matters, yet our political parties took nine months just to appoint a CEO to the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). It did not matter to them that earthquake survivors were wet, cold and hungry while they were wrangling over the NRA’s seat.

This lack of seriousness, an absolute disregard for the people’s welfare and the shocking confidence that they are indispensable makes one wonder what we Nepalis ever did to deserve politicians like those.

Our tragedy is not that we live in one of the most perilous and disaster-prone parts of the world, but that we have inherited a political class that is capable of keeping this country in a perpetual state of ruin as long as they can benefit from it.

With two big earthquakes and a prolonged drought in western Nepal, continue to do the best they can to survive day-to-day.

Wrong. We should be catching up with delayed infrastructure projects, but they are in limbo. With things returning to normal, there should have been a semblance of governance by now.

What has stopped the government from amending discriminatory citizenship provisions in the constitution to give equal rights to Nepali women? What has stopped it from eliminating fear, doubt and misinformation that has been spread among Madhesis about the new constitution? How long will our leaders keep on pointing at external threats to hide their incompetence, and how long will people buy their lies? It took an Indian blockade to wake some of our leaders from their slumber and sign a transit treaty with China. What will prompt them to pursue Nepal’s interests beyond mere survival for the greater wellbeing of their people?

The way things are going, the international community is eager to write off Nepal as a failed state, and it is hard not to notice an alliance forming that wants to discredit and delegitimise the Nepali nation. If our parties do not get their act together, there are more difficult days ahead.

For all their talk of a failed state, and it is hard to give equal rights to Madhesi, Nepal is facing grave existential threat from different quarters that Nepal feelings. There are now claims that India blockading Nepal would lead to a humanitarian crisis, the international community kept its mouth shut for fear of hurting India’s feelings. There are now claims from different quarters that Nepal is facing grave existential threat owing to the Madhes unrest, but by failing to support Nepal when it was most needed, the international community has proven once and for all that it is not a neutral partner. Nepalis are trapped between corrupt and incompetent political forces within, and external powers without. Both are working to advance their self-interest at the cost of the ordinary people of Nepal. Understandably, there is an air of cynicism and collective despair, but survivors of the earthquake and those reeling under food shortages caused by a prolonged drought in western Nepal, continue to do the best they can to survive day-to-day.

Much to the disappointment of blockade imposition, Nepal did not come tumbling down in those five months last year. And perhaps Nepal will continue to do the best they can to survive despite the doomsayers because of the fortitude and wisdom of its hardy people.

Nepalis learnt long ago they cannot rely on their government, and recent events have taught us we cannot rely on outsiders either.
Interval in Janakpur

Some organised crime dons are more equal than others in the Tarai

L ast Tuesday, I was sitting at a tea shop in Janakpur just as a group of political activists were moving up the street asking shopkeepers to shut.

It soon became clear that they were supporters of Sanjay Sah, the elected MP from this area, who has been serving a jail sentence for allegedly masterminding the bomb attack two years ago on a group demanding a separate Mithila Province at Janakpur’s Ramanand Chak that killed five and injured 32.

A month ago, police arrested a local gang leader who told them that Sah was also behind the murder of Janakpur publisher Arun Singhania in 2010. Sah claims he is clean, and that he has been framed for both crimes.

The Sanjay Sah story is the talk of the town in Janakpur today. People are divided about whether Sah is indeed the culprit. There is some resentment against the government and police for hunting an innocent man, but others are happy that Sah is in jail.

The plot thickens now with the fact that all this may have more to do with rival organised crime outfits than anything else. Sah is opposed to another local don by the name of Jeevan Chaudhary. If Sah is in jail, so should Chaudhary, many here think. In fact, they say Chaudhary is more of a criminal than Sah and should be the one behind bars.

Ram Yadav, a young Janakpur businessman, says the town is overrun by organised crime figures who prospered during the blockade. “This is an interval in the politics, things will hot up again after it is over,” he said, sipping tea, and pointing outside at one group trying to close the market on behalf of Sah, and the other one trying to keep it open on behalf of Chaudhary.

After his alleged role in the Singhania murder was exposed by police, Sah and his family have been trying to gain public sympathy by portraying him as a victim of political vendetta.

A well-known civil society member here told me on condition of anonymity that when Sah was arrested two years ago, Chaudhary threatened him and others to sign affidavits proving his guilt. The source said he refused to sign, but many others did.

The public in Janakpur is caught between the two gangs, but there is growing disenchantment with the police for keeping Sah in jail while Chaudhary is free to roam around threatening people.

Sah’s wife, Rangoli, has already started a hunger strike to seek his release. “If both are mafias, why is only one of them arrested?” asked one relative. Local intellectuals and civil society leaders say that police should treat all criminals equally.

FAIR TRIAL: Supporters of MP Sanjay Sah who has been serving a jail sentence for allegedly masterminding the 2014 bomb attack in Janakpur organise a foot-onto death demanding his release.

and (if both are judged Janakpur would be back on track. Sah is the only elected MP of the Siddhuvans Party that was on the forefront of the recent Madhes movement. Even as other Madhesi leaders held talks with the Big Three in Kathmandu, the Siddhuvans Chief Rajendra Mahato led street protests. Interestingly, after India hinted at lifting the blockade, Mahato was the first Madhesi leader to publicly admit that their border-centric protest was a failure. Mahato and other Madhesi leaders have now formed a broader alliance with Janajati parties. The Federal Alliance is preparing to bring in thousands of people from outside the valley to lay a siege on Singhara Barabar, and giving a reason for the main opposition NC to demand PM KP Oli’s resignation.

Leaders know that creating just two federal provinces covering the whole Tarai is not possible, and they are now preparing a new strategy to join hands with the NC and topple the government. But they are also cautious about a possible backlash from their constituencies.
Self-reliance
NMB Bank recently launched Aatmanirbharta, its corporate campaign aimed to finance various businesses. Ranging from agriculture to project financing, the bank aims to re-emphasise its focus on micro, SME enterprises and entrepreneurship across the country.

Qatar bags awards
Qatar Airways was recently awarded Airline with the Best Business Class and Best Airport Lounge in the Middle East for the Al Mourjan Business Lounge in Hamad International Airport at the Business Traveller Middle East Awards 2016. The airline currently has three flights from Kathmandu to Doha daily, connecting Nepal to over 150 destinations worldwide.

Insured partnership
Everest Bank recently signed an agreement with MetLife Nepal for bancassurance partnership. With this agreement, EBL customers can now avail different insurance products of MetLife from the bank’s branches.

I
defocused by her thoughts, dreams and aspirations. Colourful leaves, flowers, butterflies, even monkeys, fish and cats sowed around the face add to its flamboyance.

Tucked away under the staircas of the envoy’s residence is Lisa Cameron Russell’s impressive Praire Cactus painted with layers of latex enamel on gallery-wrapped canvas. From afar, it appears to be three huge yellow cactus flowers. As one draws nearer, the texture of the painting comes to life. A representational painting from a distance, it now becomes an abstract art with booming colours.

“The works of art express American culture in a small way and give a chance to bring people to the house and talk about art in a different way,” said Teplitz, who has been active in pushing for gender equality since her appointment last year. Her first trip outside the valley was to participate in a Women’s Build with Habitat for Humanity in Kavre.

“Every piece tells a story and you can relate to it despite being a Nepali or an American,” Teplitz told Nepali Times during a gathering to introduce guests to artworks by American artists curated by Sarah Tanguy of the Art in Embassies Office in Washington DC. Teplitz and Tanguy chose artworks by women and artists from minority groups in the US. The photographs, paintings and even tapestries make for a diverse collection. From Susan Makara’s Convivial rocks, an oil and metallic leaf painting of cairn rocks in Arianna, to modern interpretations of indigenous culture in Tony Abeyta’s Infinite Wisdom and Crystal Worl’s Into Water, Teplitz has tried to feature glimpses of her native Pacific Northwest.

Two photographs, Szczekot’s Prayer flags over Colorado and Carol Nelson’s Aspen View, a picturesque landscape art with mountains in the background, have been particularly picked because of its similarities to Nepal.

Among the other pieces, Jane Cochran’s Mind Games with its dramatic patchwork adds to the vibrancy of the living room of the residence. Inspired by the tradition of American quilting, Cochran uses the technique of sewing and beading to create a portrait of a woman’s face festooned by her thoughts, dreams and aspirations. Colourful leaves, flowers, butterflies, even monkeys, fish and cats sowed around the face add to its flamboyance.

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The evening to introduce the artworks ended on a musical note with Raptivist (rap + activist) Aisha Fukushima and her band performing. Fukushima’s global hip hop project will be conducting workshops across Nepal with youth on freedom of expression and strengthening democracy.

Smriti Basnet
A group of former Maoist combatants is demanding action against the Maoist leadership for exploiting them as child soldiers

Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) offer a glimmer of hope, delusional or otherwise. Both organisations began registering complaints as of mid-April, a year after their formation and 10 years after the conflict ended, indicating the government has finally run out of excuses to delay the process any longer.

Newspapers carried heart-rending tales of sons and husbands murdered by Maoists or disappeared by the army, reminding us of the Pointless War’s tragic impact on so many families, many of whom still wait and pray for justice.

Events took an unexpected turn when a group called the Discharged People’s Liberation Army Struggle Committee filed a complaint with the TRC, demanding action against the Maoist leadership for exploiting them as child soldiers. Known as the Disqualified, they represent the 4,000 ‘fighters’ refused entry into the UN camps for being underage.

It’s well known that many ‘Mao kiddies’ were rounded up by the party, given a few days training and an old pressure cooker ‘bomb’, and presented to UNMIN as bona fide combatants. This highly cynical ploy to inflate PLA numbers, which Prachanda bragged about in the leaked Shakhtikler tapes, made a fool of both the UN and government.

Worse still, while many imposters were accepted into the camps some of those rejected were actually battle-hardened soldiers. Lenin Bista, the group’s aptly named spokesman, was recruited in 2002 at the age of 12 and served 4 years in the PLA before being disqualified by the UN. He now heads an organisation of former child soldiers demanding action against the Maoist leadership.

Though it’s no surprise that the only ones seeking justice are the victims and their families the complete lack of support for the process from any of the political parties, either in government or opposition, reeks of high level collusion.

Spreading the blame further, the group accuses both the government and UN of willful negligence for ignoring the PLA’s rampant use of minors.

International protocols on child rights oblige the authorities to arrest anyone breaking such laws, yet nothing was done. UNMIN’s mandate in 2006 was limited but didn’t preclude condemning the use of child soldiers and demanding action against those responsible.

The group’s request for recognition, reparations and security is a courageous step towards their own cadre tortured and disappeared by the army? Wouldn’t it make sense for the governing UML to empower the commissions and finally bring closure to an agonising chapter in the country’s history, especially since so many of the slain were their own?

LOGICALLY speaking, the opposition NC should be demanding justice but instead stays quiet, perhaps because most of the war crimes committed by the state took place while Girija Prasad Koirala was PM.

Another explanation for this conspiracy of silence is most of the victims were poor villagers, mere pawns in the game, and how can we expect those so willing to forget their own fallen comrades to give a damn about the thousands of nameless dead?

While the Maoists have gone to extraordinary lengths to place their high ranking members in lucrative posts while shielding them from prosecution, no such concern was ever shown for their rank and file. Perhaps they should have been kinder, considering the leadership now stands accused of crimes against humanity by its own troops, a charge that takes irony to new heights.

Both commissions can expect more resistance, obstruction and pressure from all quarters the cases evolve.

The army’s immediate demand that the CIEDP furnish a list of complainants is menacing, especially since they have no legal right to do so, and suggests the military plans to actively undermine the commission however they can.

The Maoists, meanwhile, are feverishly trying to shift cases against their cadre from civil courts to the TRC, where they must believe their chances of achieving a whitewash are greater.

It’s clearly not going to be easy, especially given the law shows Nepal’s political and military brass consider themselves above the law. None can be trusted to pursue justice, most can be expected to obstruct it, and all are actively colluding in this pursuit.

Perhaps the only hope lies with the international community and donors, who can leverage their influence to ensure the cases proceed without interference. Otherwise, this historic exercise, supposed to bring closure for the victims and help heal the nation, risks degenerating into yet another shabby travesty of justice.

If our leaders manage to pull that off the impunity they’ve grown so fond of will be theirs forever.
O ver 60,000 people watched, mesmerized as Nepal’s most popular band 1974 AD took stage at the Dasarath Stadium in Kathmandu and belted out some of their biggest hits (including ‘Nepali Hit’ and ‘Pahilo Jumni’), songs that made the audience wave the decisive triangle wildly. This was 2000 and the band had just put on the country’s biggest concert.

Sixteen years on, 1974 AD continues to attract the same fervour from Nepalis everywhere despite changing its line-up more than once. The numbers are not just songs, they are anthems. Which explains why the band’s booking calendar is already full for this year.

“1974 AD has become a sort of an institution. Even if we were to leave tomorrow, the band and its legacy will carry on,” says drummer Sanjay Shrestha, one of the only three remaining members from the original band.

After delivering hits like ‘Sambohadh’, ‘Parelima’, and ‘Chushandi Cho10’ the band hit a bump in their journey in 2008 when lead vocalist Pabitra Syangden left. The news didn’t sit well with hardcore fans who voiced their dissatisfaction at their beloved rockstar being replaced by another.

Despite the initial backlash the event eventually warmed up to Adrian Pradhan taking Syangden’s spot and the band’s album Aast Aastara dominated airwaves.

Last year Adrian Pradhan also left the band, which led to the formation of a brand new 1974 AD. Besides Manoj KC, Nirakar Yakkumthama and Sanjay Shrestha, the band now consists of four more members: all young musicians – Pratik Mahayana, Rohit John Chhetri, Jack Wacko and Pratik Bhattiya – associated with the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory.

“I grew up listening to 1974 AD. Never did I think I’d be a part of it,” says new vocalist Pratik Mahayana. The young members are proud to be part of such a legendary band, but also understand that audience expectations will be high.

“There is a lot of pressure, but we all practice a lot and that makes us confident enough to perform on stage,” says Jack Wacko, who plays the trumpet.

The band is currently working on its new album which will feature wider use of Nepali folk instruments fused with western trombone and trumpet.

For the two decades 1974 AD has been around, the band has never needed to promote itself through music videos. Manoj KC admits that none of the band’s videos has a wow factor. In fact, the popularity of its songs – especially till 2006 when radio was still a popular medium – huged the band to fame.

By playing a mix of rock, funk and classical, 1974 AD made it in the new century giving people a variety of music to listen to. Its popularity took the band to the international stage, and it still regularly performs overseas in U.S, UK and Australia. Today, despite the changes, their efforts are still focused to offer its audience one-of-a-kind music. Said Sanjay Shrestha: “We want to continue to reach out to as many people as possible.”

nepalitimes.com
(last to 1974 AD logo)
When her husband left her, Krishna Devi Khadka of Barcia came to Kathmandu to work so she could raise her two little children. She found a job as a cook at a hotel in Gongabu. When the earthquake hit on 25 April she was in the kitchen and the seven-storey building collapsed around her even before she could run to safety. A falling concrete beam trapped her, but also saved her life.

She could not budge, but heard people shouting above her. She lost consciousness, and woke up in hospital. She was surprised to find out that she had been under the rubble for six days.

Khadka’s uncle Durga Bahadur Thapa came to Kathmandu searching for her, but was not hopeful he would find her alive after seeing the ruins of the hotel.

“When she was finally pulled out, I thought she was being born again,” he said.

Khadka and her children now live with her uncle. “He has always been kind to me, but I do not want to be a burden to him,” she said. “I am trying to learn skills, so I can raise my children.”

Priya BK

Priya BK, 15, wanted to follow in her uncle’s footsteps by joining the Nepal Police. She was physically fit, and could outrun all her friends. On 25 April last year, she was washing clothes at a public tap near her rented room in Tarkeswor. She started running away from the tall buildings, but a compound wall collapsed, burying her. She was rescued and taken to hospital where doctors plastered her left leg. She went home the same day, but started feeling unbearable pain. The family took her to hospital again the next day and doctors had to amputeate her leg.

Her father, Arjun BK said: “I did not want to see my daughter lose her leg, but I loved her too much to lose her.”

It took Priya time to learn to live on crutches and prosthetics. She missed her exams, but caught up with help from her friends. But she needs help to go to school, since it is not disability-friendly.

“The earthquake ruined my dream to become a police officer,” she says. “But I am determined to achieve something in life.”

Amrit Magar

Amrit Magar, 16, was a football star in the making. Playing since childhood in Baukdi district and in Kathmandu when his parents moved here, he was in the field every chance he got.

When the earthquake hit, the teenager was watching tv at home. His parents had gone out to work. He quickly ran out, but a compound wall collapsed and buried him below waist. He was rushed to hospital by neighbours where doctors plastered the leg and sent him home. But when the pain continued, doctors amputated his leg.

“I was not sad because I lost my leg,” he says. “I was sad because I thought I would never be able to play football again.”
Aftershocks

Sanu Maharjan

Sanu Maharjan lost his home to the 25 April earthquake and then his mother to the 12 May aftershock. He was in his shop in Jorpati when the first quake struck and rushed home to Sitalapa to find that it was a heap of rubble. His wife Ganga, son Manish and daughter Manisha were in hospital. They were buried, but rescued alive.

Although he lost his home, Maharjan was glad his family was alive. But then the 7.3 magnitude aftershock of 12 May killed his mother. The family still lives in a tin shelter near the ruins of their house.

Rishik Khanal

Three days before the earthquake, Rishik Khanal bade farewell to his family in Archakhanchi and came to Kathmandu to catch his flight to Dubai. A few days before he was to leave, the Gongaba hotel he was staying in collapsed in the earthquake.

The 27-year-old was trapped under the rubble for 82 hours, and drank his own urine to survive. A team of French and Nepali rescuers brought him out – he lived to tell his tale but lost his leg.

Khanal spent eight months in a hospital in Kathmandu, which he says were as excruciating as the days he spent under the rubble. "I got free treatment, but I was unable to earn to feed my family," he says. "I am now worried about my son's future more than my own."

As Nepal commemorated the first anniversary of the earthquake this week, Khanal was once again in Kathmandu for a hospital follow-up. He is still in pain, but wants to learn a skill. He says: "If I get vocational training, I can feed my family even by standing on just one leg."
Talk on air pollution,
A talk by Dr Jit Vinjap, clinical lecturer at the University of Calgary, advocating adaptation of a Canadian model to improve air quality in Nepal. Registration recommended.
30 April, 11 am to 12 pm, Clean Up Nepal, Tangle, 013101003; info@cleanupnepal.org.np

King’s Day,
Go orange and celebrate the Dutch holiday Koningsdag (King’s Day) in Kathmandu with Het Paardenkenshus - The Dutch Pavilion House of Nepal.
30 April, 10 am to 6 pm, Het Paardenkenshus, SanoGa, 9808317523, sago.p@gmail.com

Girls on Wheels,
Gear up for a treasure hunt on your scooters around Kathmandu with KCM’s Girls on Wheel. Men allowed to participate only as navigators.
30 April, 9 am onwards, Cool Mall, Sundara

The Heritage,
Eclipsing the hospitable of the tourist rush as you relish delights like paal and paal mori. Thamel, 014254343

Hyatt Regency,
Enjoy a sumptuous Indian-style lunch at Hyatt’s Roí Restaurant featuring a variety of dishes like mushroom, leeks and sage pasta, homemade tagliatelle, lamb ravioli and a variety of ruddles and desserts.
30 April, 6.30 to 10 pm, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, Basantapur, 014491234

Khatarnath Kora,
16 July, 7.30 am onwards, Mangalbazar

Get sporty,
Run or ride rock climb at the fifth edition of Himalayan Outdoor Festival.
29 April to 1 May, Midhun Valley, Pharping, www.himalayanoofestival.com, 9852397002, 9840179255

Critical Mass,
Reclaim the streets of Kathmandu with fellow bicyclists to celebrate the third anniversary of critical mass Kathmandu.
29 April, 5.20 pm onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square

Open data,
Attend a talk by the Chief Commissioner of National Information Commission, Krishna Hari Baskota on open government data in Nepal.
5 May, 1 to 4 pm, The Platform Inc, Litar Dohal, 014415793, 9801015627

All about jazz,
Celebrate the fifth International Jazz Day with a concert followed by a jazz workshop organised by KKC.
30 April, Open onwards, Mukh, Jhanenkhel, 0144012554

Downtown,
Go Indian at this restaurant, although it serves Chinese and Continental food too. Don’t miss out on the biryani.
Pulchowk, 015010765

REM O
Research and Monitoring System

Aims: Drought monitoring system

Remo is a research and monitoring system that can capture, analyze and visualize data together. Tremendously useful and cost effective, REMO opens a new frontier on how business analytics can be conducted. JAG Enterprises and FIELD journal state, ‘Data once ingested into the system can be accessed and modified on the go. The data collected is seamlessly aggregated on the system allowing high level access that dynamically tracks and meaningful insights in real-time. Using simple SQL or this data is instantly coverted to intelligence. “T* Nepal System to be deployed in all 75 districts. 200,000 sample sites”

Dining

Dining

BAC Mela,
Local products, foodstuffs and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family at BAC’S monthly mela.
30 April, 12 to 7 pm, BAC Art Café, Downtown, 014438633

Getaway

Miss Motivation

Kripa Joshi

The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.

Gourmet

Grill Me,
A restaurant with a warm ambiance and delicious grilled delights.
Jhamakhel, 015552504

Saigon Pho,
Spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes.
Lajimpat, 014443330

Nepathya live,
Folk rock band Nepathya will be performing to raise funds for earthquake victims and spread the message of strength through solidarity.
14 May, 5 to 7 pm, Gates open at 4 pm. Tickets priced at Rs 1000, www.nepathya.com/

Rhytmic night,
Enjoy a musical evening with 90s nepali pop sensation Deepak Bajracharya and The Rhythm Band.
20 April, 7 pm onwards, The Victory Lounge, Basantapur

Metal night,
14 May, 7.30 pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9801024137

Dining

Shangri-La Village Resort,
Escape the heat this summer with a two day and three night package at Shangri-La Village Resort in Pokhara.
30 April, 12 to 6 pm, Reggae Bar, Octave.

Metal night,
14 May, 7.30 pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, 9801024137

Milla Guesthouse,
If you prefer the quiet, and admire a mix of old and new, this is the perfect place to stay. Not too far away from the city, yet miles apart.
Bhaktapur, 0151024137

Getaway

Dining

BAC Mela,
Local products, foodstuffs and a second-hand garage sale plus entertainment for the whole family at BAC’S monthly mela.
30 April, 12 to 7 pm, BAC Art Café, Downtown, 014438633

Get sporty,
Run or ride rock climb at the fifth edition of Himalayan Outdoor Festival.
29 April to 1 May, Midhun Valley, Pharping, www.himalayanoofestival.com, 9852397002, 9840179255

Critical Mass,
Reclaim the streets of Kathmandu with fellow bicyclists to celebrate the third anniversary of critical mass Kathmandu.
29 April, 5.20 pm onwards, Basantapur Darbar Square

Open data,
Attend a talk by the Chief Commissioner of National Information Commission, Krishna Hari Baskota on open government data in Nepal.
5 May, 1 to 4 pm, The Platform Inc, Litar Dohal, 014415793, 9801015627
TWIN PASSAGES
Two American expatriates who devoted their lives to Nepal passed away this month

BARBARA ADAMS

Barbara Adams came to Nepal 74 years ago even before the hippies did. The lush valley of Kathmandu, its pristine culture and nature attracted the early globetrotters of the new jet age. Sitting at the Royal Hotel one evening, she got chatting with Prince Banduha, King Mahendra’s brother and the two became inseparable. Even though Banduha was married, they didn’t bother to hide their affair, and were often seen together in public.

She was a prominent member of the Kathmandu’s high society and diplomatic circles in the 1970s and 80s, driving around in her convertible along Patali Sadak (long before Kathmandu got its first traffic light) with her striking blonde hair flowing in the slipstream. After the 1980 People’s Movement that turned the king into a constitution monarch, Adams fell foul with the democratic leaders and was once denied by Giri Prasad Koilala government when she landed in Kathmandu airport from Delhi. After the conflict began, she became a peace activist and many were surprised by her open sympathy for the Maoist rebels in her translated columns for Jan Aatha.

However, she often voiced concern that violence would not achieve anything, and was critical of the state’s crackdowns in Maoist affected areas.

Barbara Adams also wore a weekly column for this newspaper in the early 2000s called Barbara’s Beat, with a strong voice in support of the downtrodden and the neglect of the Nepali state towards their needs. Having spent decades trying to bring about positive change through her writing, and despairing of the lack of progress after the conflict, she opted for direct action with the Barbara Peace Foundation to help Dalit families in far-western Nepal which buys land and sets up self-sustaining communities by giving the community more self-esteem.

“I wanted to give something back to Nepal,” she told this newspaper two years ago. At first she had tried to create a Nepali Peace Corps, encouraging young people to volunteer to work in their own country rather than to migrate abroad for jobs. While successful, the project was too expensive to sustain.

Barbara Adams died of complications after an abdominal operation in Kathmandu on 22 April. She was 84.

This line from one of her columns in 2001 in Nepali Times gives a flavour of Barbara Adams’ sympathy for the underserved in society and her direct writing style: “If we are to have peace, understanding and a meaningful dialogue with these young warriors who call themselves Maoists, we first have to... understand the problems which led young teachers and farmers to risk their lives to take up arms. We have to understand the movement’s roots, its devotions, its justification and compulsions, and the horror, the pain and also the humanity involved in the process of bringing change to the lives of the suffering masses.”

JIM DANISCH

Jim Danisch came on a trek to Nepal in 1979 to meet his friend Judith Conan Chase. Their Guru Swami Rama suggested they get married, and they did in a Vedic ceremony in 1984 (pic, above). He worked for nine years in Thimphu for the German agency, GTZ, to promote ceramics designing a new type of kiln and introducing glazed porcelain as a Nepali handicraft. He helped set up 24 new ceramics workshops in Nepal.

He returned to California in 1995 and worked on his ceramic art and sculptures, but the bug of Nepal was too strong and he returned to a village in Kheer where, with Judith, he set up the Everything Organic Nursery to promote green agriculture and got local farmers interested.

“Jim was energetically involved in village life, helping to fund the expansion of a local school and to fund rain-harvesting ponds so that villages enjoy water year round,” Judith wrote in a tribute. Danisch was also involved with his wife in the design of the Living Traditions Museum at Changaurayyan, which was badly damaged in last year’s earthquake, although the exhibits survived.

Jim Danisch died on 29 March in Dillikhel Hospital after a brief and painless illness, near where he was married at Humedra Ashram in 1984. He was cremated in the full Hindu tradition at Dhaple Ghat, the village cremation site, and Judith observed the 12-day mourning process.

Danisch saw the Hindu spiritual side of Nepali pottery-making and wrote in an article in Ceramics Today: "Symbolically, the potter’s wheel is, as great god Vishnu’s discourse, spins out the Hindu creation myth..."
Sometimes a film can creep up on you and really surprise you with its heft, coming suddenly out of nowhere and becoming a favourite. Of the eight films nominated this past season in the ‘Best Picture’ category by the Academy, many have shown themselves to be little gems that are more profound than the usual heavy hitters that populate this exceedingly competitive but increasingly disappointing category.

Many of these nominees have been previously, positively reviewed in this column each finding a niche in my heart for their own special qualities. The same has happened most recently with Brooklyn, a charming, beautifully shot film, adapted from a novel by Colm Tóibín of the same name, about a lovely, bright, young Irish girl, Eilis Lacy (Saoirse Ronan) who is forced to leave her mother and sister to move to Brooklyn to find work.

The plot, set at the beginning of the 1950s, when summarised, is deceptively simple: Eilis (which is pronounced Ailish in Gaelic), who is brilliant at mathematics, quickly moves away from the swanky department store job that is waiting for her, organised courtesy of a kindly Catholic priest, Father Flood (Jim Broadbent), and becomes qualified as a book-keeper.

Her sister Rose’s (Fiona Glascott) letters keep her heart full of Ireland and her family, and she slowly makes friends at her boarding house despite deep homesickness. When Eilis meets Tony Fiorello (Emory Cohen), a big hearted, adorably articulate Italian American from Long Island, it seems her integration into the new world record is complete.

Of course, that is not all that the universe, well Tóibín the writer, has in store for young Eilis. Brooklyn is indeed a coming of age story, but unlike most in the genre, it is a subtle, deep one that does not hit you over the head with needless melodrama. Brooklyn is also a story about finding one’s place and finally belonging, a condition that is almost always linked to both home and family.

Eilis’s story is not a new one, in fact, it is a story that is repeated the world over in this time of financial instability, conflict, forced migration, and of course natural disaster. Brooklyn therefore, is not a film that is self-indulgent nor is it just a romantic tale told to glorify the possibility of making your own destiny in the United States. Instead it is a story of personal fortitude, family ties, grace, and humour under adversity, and finally, a love story that endures over the ages.

Eilis and Tony may not be the heroes that Hollywood so often sells to the masses, but their lives are made riveting by their humanity, their families, and their ties, ultimately, to Brooklyn.

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Eilis and Tony may not be the heroes that Hollywood so often sells to the masses, but their lives are made riveting by their humanity, their families, and their ties, ultimately, to Brooklyn.
Suspicous action

Editorial, Kantipur, 25 April

The arrest by the Commission on the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) on Friday of Sajha Yatayat Chair and Himalmedia publisher Kanak Mani Dixit has raised questions about the anti-corruption watchdog’s jurisdiction. The point is whether the Commission can or cannot investigate or obtain Dixit, the more important concerns are about the kind of accusations against him and the manner in which he was detained. The CIAA has not furnished satisfactory explanations about them, putting its entire action into controversy and doubt.

To be sure, the CIAA is mandated by the constitution and the laws of the land to investigate public officials. We journalists, publishers or personalities that society regards as prominent should not expect to be treated differently than other citizens. But the CIAA also cannot overstep its mandate.

The CIAA claims Dixit has been booked for “misusing disproportionate wealth” not as Publisher of Himalmedia but as Chair of Sajha Yatayat. The CIAA is allowed to investigate Dixit’s dealings with Sajha, but not his personal assets that predates his appointment in the transportation cooperative, and that falls beyond the CIAA’s terms of reference.

If there is even a bit of truth in these allegations, then it is for the Department of Money Laundering or other branches of government to investigate. Dixit is well known for his long-standing involvement in journalism, publishing, radio and civil society activism. He was at the forefront of protests against the appointment of Lok Man Singh Karki to head the CIAA two years ago because of his role as Chief Secretary in the royal government. But to seek revenge against a citizen for using his constitutionally-protected right of free expression smacks of dictatorship.

It is also not clear why the CIAA felt it necessary to put Dixit behind bars in order to investigate him. Did Karki take this decision on his own, or was this a collective one by the CIAA? What is the opinion of the other commissioners on this? It is by now a well known fact that the CIAA chief Karki has a habit of going after people who point fingers at him. Whether it is political leaders or legislators critical of him or others, he has been snubbing more and more of them for interrogations at the CIAA. The Commission should only publicize the complaints about someone after it has gathered enough evidence to take them to a court of law. But what the CIAA has done here is to incorporate details of an ordinary complaint in its public notice, the sole intention of which can only be character assassination. Also, there are suspicions about the CIAA’s true intentions from the way it has not kept Dixit in CIAA custody, as is the usual practice, but to lock him up with other prisoners at the Ghusaiba Police Post.

The Special Court on Sunday has remanded Dixit in custody for ten days pending investigations. And Dixit has also said he will contest the accusations against him in the courts. But if the courts cannot prove that the charges against him are true, who will compensate him? Is the CIAA free to destroy a person’s character? Surely not. If it is proven that the investigations against him are driven by a sense of revenge this will not just raise questions about the CIAA’s working methods, but also undermine its reputation.

CIAA vs Dixit

Constitutional law expert Bijay Adhikari in BBC Nepal Service, 27 April

BBC: Many have accused the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) of overstepping its jurisdiction in Kanak Mani Dixit’s detention, is it so? Bijay Adhikari: If a person holding public office abuses his power, the CIAA can investigate the corruption charges against him. It is within its jurisdiction.

If so, why is the CIAA being criticised? The CIAA is not a court. It’s just an institution with a mandate to investigate corruption cases. It has to follow a due process, and there is concern that it failed to do so in Dixit’s case.

The CIAA is still investigating, but it has already made public the complaints against him. Is it legal? If the unproven complaints are made public and the accused is later absolved of all charges, the damage done to his reputation cannot be compensated.

The CIAA has said it had to arrest Dixit because the latter did not cooperate. The CIAA got arrest a person who does not cooperate. But Dixit had moved the Supreme Court, claiming that the CIAA’s charge against him was an act of vengeance. And the court had ordered the anti-graft body to take action against Dixit only after establishing sufficient evidence. But the CIAA detailed Dixit disgracing the apex court’s order. As a lawyer, I find Dixit’s stand logical.

As a constitution expert, do you find flaws in the two statements that the CIAA issued? The second statement in English, in particular, is crude and ruthless. It reproves the CIAA negatively towards Dixit.

Dixit fought for democracy. But political leaders are silent even when he is not being allowed to meet his lawyers despite a Special Court order.

Perhaps they haven’t seen the media reports: it is a person’s fundamental right to meet his lawyer and family members while in custody.

But his fundamental rights are being violated... We have National Human Rights Commission and rights groups. We also have the Office of Attorney General. They should act if fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution are violated.
City of devotees devotes itself to

While the rest of the country just talks about federalism, Bhaktapur is already practicing self-governance

SEULKI LEE
IN BHAKTAPUR

A nine-year-old girl was collecting water one morning last week from a public tap in Jenu, a part of Bhaktapur behind Dattatraya Square that was devastated by the earthquake last year. Sunflowers are growing on the heaps of rubble in the neighbourhood, indicating the passage of time.

Some 8,000 houses collapsed during the earthquake in Bhaktapur, which was one of the worst-hit towns in the Valley. Rehabilitation here has been faster than other places, but it is surprising how many people are still living in temporary shelters.

“Reconstruction and rehabilitation is the priority of the Nepal Workers Peasants’ Party and its leader Comrade Rokt for the next few years,” says Nitaj Lawaj, head of the NWPP’s student wing.

Bhaktapur’s Dear Leader

For Gopal Lachmash, a 49-year-old tea shop owner next to the Dattatraya temple in Bhaktapur, the Korean peninsula is not 4,000km away but just next door.

The rest of Nepal may be in the grip of a South Korean pop culture fever, but here in Bhaktapur it is Juche idea of North Korea’s founding leader Kim Il-Sung that is the dominant ideology.

“DPRK’s political system is similar to Nepal’s Panchayat,” explains Lachmash. “It is the other developed countries, this tight system helps development and social unity because there is discipline.”

To outsiders Bhaktapur may look like it is in a time warp given its affinity to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), but for its fifth-time elected lawmaker, Narayan Man Bijukchhde of the communist Nepal Workers Peasants’ Party (NWPP) which has led Bhaktapur for three decades, it makes perfect sense.

“Just as the Korean people are dominated by the American and Japanese ruling class, India is doing the same to Nepal and the Nepalis, there are similarities between Korea and Nepal,” Bijukchhde told Nepal Times. (See interview overleaf)

Bijukchhde finds nothing incongruous about North Korea’s defiance of the West and its missile and nuclear weapons policy, saying it represents the country’s ideology of Juche (self-reliance) which itself is a consequence of geopolitics in the Korean peninsula that involves China, Japan, South Korea and the United States.

“Kim Il-Sung is one of the great teachers for Nepal together with Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Rosa Luxembourg to learn communism”
‘Bhik’ is the nemi de guerre of Nayan Man Bijukchhe, the former underground communist leader who has ruled Bhaktapur for three decades. “In every election, 100 per cent of the people in Jena’s vote for the NWFP,” Louwoi, 31, joined the NWFP when he was a teenager and being a party member is a family tradition for most in Bhaktapur. He is a firm believer that the NWFP’s effort to raise education standards and peasants’ rights will lead to prosperity. “This is a farmers’ town and a centre of the peasantry’s movement, but we have a college graduate in every family, and we hope to build our prosperity through a strong cultural tradition,” explained Louwoi during a walkabout at the Nyakoplo Square. “Before, the people of Kathmandu looked down upon us, now they admire us.”

Rajani Shrestha ([left in pic below], a Patton resident and vice-principal of Khowapa Engineering College in Bhaktapur, says she envies this town: “The one major difference between Bhaktapur and Patton is that it has a visionary leader, and there is a local political party that is totally committed to the community.”

Khowapa Engineering College, Bagwati School and Bhaktapur Community Clinic are examples of Bijukchhe and his NWFP’s commitment to fulfilling election pledges in last local election to improve education.

Though Bijukchhe is against federalism in Nepal’s new constitution (see interview, right), he is the only political leader today who already praktizes autonomous and decentralized local self-government. Which must be why there are very few international organisations active in Bhaktapur town, because the party does such an effective job.

There is still a long way to federalism in Nepal but Bhaktapur can provide an example how local government can function by utilising local sources of tourism and prioritising social services for the good of the people,” said geographer Pimbothar Sharma.

A 34-year-old farmer Birajbender Kanchha admits that there is a delay in reconstruction, but blames the central government. “I’m proud of Bhaktapur. We are setting an example for the preservation of cultural and architectural heritage in Kathmandu Valley,” he said.

Still, some in Bhaktapur say the NWFP hasn’t been proactive in reconstruction, and younger people in Bhaktapur don’t seem as aware of Bijukchhe’s past achievements.

Said Shyam Durbhandel, 83, founder of Siddhi Memorial Hospital: “Bijukchhe and his party have done a remarkable job in development, but they are still communists. They have a vision but are a bit closed, and not so eager to collaborate with others.”

REBUILDING OURSELVES

lessons,” explained 31-year-old NWFP member Ramesh Suwal, “the Juche idea is a directional ideology of our party, we read and study a lot of literature from North Korea.”

That the Juche idea, shaped by the DPRK’s first president (1948–1991), Kim Il-sung, toward the North’s political independence and economic self-reliance, is taken so seriously as the governing ideology of a town in Nepal is puzzling to many – especially because the ideology is seen as a justification for the totalitarianism of the ‘Kim Dynasty.’

Bhaktapur’s extraordinary respect for Kim Il-sung and the Juche idea is based on the vision that Bijukchhe has for his town to be self-reliant, pre-people and propel development through tourism and its famous handicrafts. Many visitors find it encouraging that Bhaktapur, which translates as ‘town of devotes,’ is actually devoted to a Stalinist from the Korean peninsula.

After three decades, Bijukchhe is a leader who most here regard as a true nationalist, and a scrupulously honest man of the people, says Lachhnu: “He is far-sighted, and more mature and active than most other leaders in Nepal. For example as far back as 2005 when the Maoists signed the 1-point agreement in New Delhi, he had predicted that India would ultimately lose in Nepal.”

But Bijukchhe has his detractors. Bhaktapur residents living in neighbourhoods flattened by last year’s earthquake say he hasn’t done enough to expose relief and rehabilitation. They also question the relevance of an ideology imported from North Korea into a country like Nepal.

But among Bhaktapur’s many admirers is German architect Günter Hämmler who was involved in Bhaktapur’s restoration since 1979, when the city was declared a World Heritage Site, and has settled down here. He says: “He is the only politician I know who has a vision for his historic town and for the upliftment of his people.”

Seok Lee

“Federalism will weaken Nepal”

Member of Parliament from Bhaktapur, Nayan Man Bijukchhe, spoke to Nepali Times last week about his vision for the city, his mistrust of India and his admiration for North Korean leader Kim Il-sung.

Nepali Times: People say Bhaktapur is Nepal’s best governed municipality. What is it that you do differently here?

Nayan Man Bijukchhe: We consult with people, we don’t impose on them, we are transparent and they participate in decision-making. We never forget that we are serving the people, that is the difference with other parties.

And how does North Korea’s Juche idea fit into this?

After the 1990 People’s Movement, soon after we were released from jail, the first embassy in our country was from the DPRK. We learnt from the Korean history, the terrific war and the aspiration for reunification. There is sympathy towards North Korea from across the political spectrum in Nepal. In 1995, there was a massive food crisis in North Korea and we donated what we could as a town of solidarity. Just in the Korean peninsula are dominated by America and Japan, Nepal is dominated by India. The Indian ruling class is doing to Nepal exactly what British did to India. Under Narendra Modi, the Indian army is turning into monopoly capital, and he is meddling in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to capture their resources. There was a bill in parliament that would give unlimited resources to Indian and other countries for more than 50 years, we strongly opposed it, but the ruling party passed it.

Would you call yourself a communist?

Anyone who serves the workers and peasants is a communist. But Nepal’s communist parties are not true communists. Even the Maoist party is an Indian construct. And the UML is not a communist party, either, because instead of socialising the means of production it has privatised it. There is no difference between the UML and the NC.

You are elected, but how do you reconcile yourself to Korea’s totalitarian Kim dynasty?

We had BP Koirala, his brother Mantra Prasad Koirala, then Girja Prasad Koirala and then Sushil Koirala. In India, too, Jawaharlal Nehru was followed by his daughter, Indira Gandhi, then her son Rajiv Gandhi. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines and even the United States have political dynasties. South Korea has Park young-hee and her daughter. Comrade Kim Il-sung made a great contribution to Korean history, so it was free from being their son and family members to power. It’s like the children of carpenters are good woodworkers, and children of farmers are good farmers.

Some people say your party has been slow with reconstruction in Bhaktapur.

Firstly there is no elected member in the local government of Bhaktapur municipality, or anywhere in Nepal. Secondly, reconstruction is not under the jurisdiction of local government. As an MP in parliament we can’t only talk about Bhaktapur but the whole country. There are lots of hurdles, for example how is a joint family home to be reconstructed, who pays the rebuilding grant? Bhaktapur has some specific problems. If four brothers lived in a house that collapsed, they can now only rebuild after having open space — this means the house would no longer be big enough for everyone. The central governmetn doesn’t understand these problems because ministries are from wealthy cities and from outside Kathmandu Valley.

Do you plan to launch yourself beyond Bhaktapur onto the national stage?

Absolutely we are not only confined to Bhaktapur but have our presence in other parts of Nepal. The major parties are funded by the Indians, and they will use any means to stop the NWFP from being on the national stage.

Are you in favour of early local election in Nepal?

There won’t be local elections in Nepal until India wants it, and it wants to weaken Nepal through federalism. It wants local elections only after federal boundaries are announced. It doesn’t want local people to be empowered through local elections, because that would demonstrate state power and make it difficult for them to capture local resources. If we have autonomous democratically elected local bodies, we don’t need federalism.

nepalitimes.com
Nepal Bags Most Scenic Loo Award

GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING: This week's column contains some topics that may cause discomfort for some readers. It is recommended to read on in a private and quiet environment.

On this week's Back Side, let's explore a fascinating topic: the world's most scenic public toilet. Yes, you heard that right! Imagine having a serene and breathtaking experience while using the toilet!

Located in Chitwan National Park, Nepal, this toilet offers a stunning view of the周边的自然风光, making it a popular spot for tourists and locals alike. The design of the toilet blends seamlessly with the natural environment, providing visitors with a unique and unforgettable experience.

The facility is equipped with all necessary amenities, ensuring the comfort and convenience of its users. The surrounding area is characterized by lush vegetation and scenic landscapes, creating a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.

Aside from its aesthetic appeal, the toilet has also gained attention for its sustainability efforts. The facility is powered by solar panels, reducing its carbon footprint and minimizing its impact on the environment.

This-week's Back Side column serves as a reminder that even the most mundane activities can be transformed into extraordinary experiences with the right mindset and creativity. So, the next time you find yourself in a challenging situation, remember that with a little bit of innovation and imagination, even the simplest tasks can become remarkable.

Stay tuned for more exciting and thought-provoking columns on Back Side. Until then, keep exploring and enjoying the beauty of our world, one step at a time!