

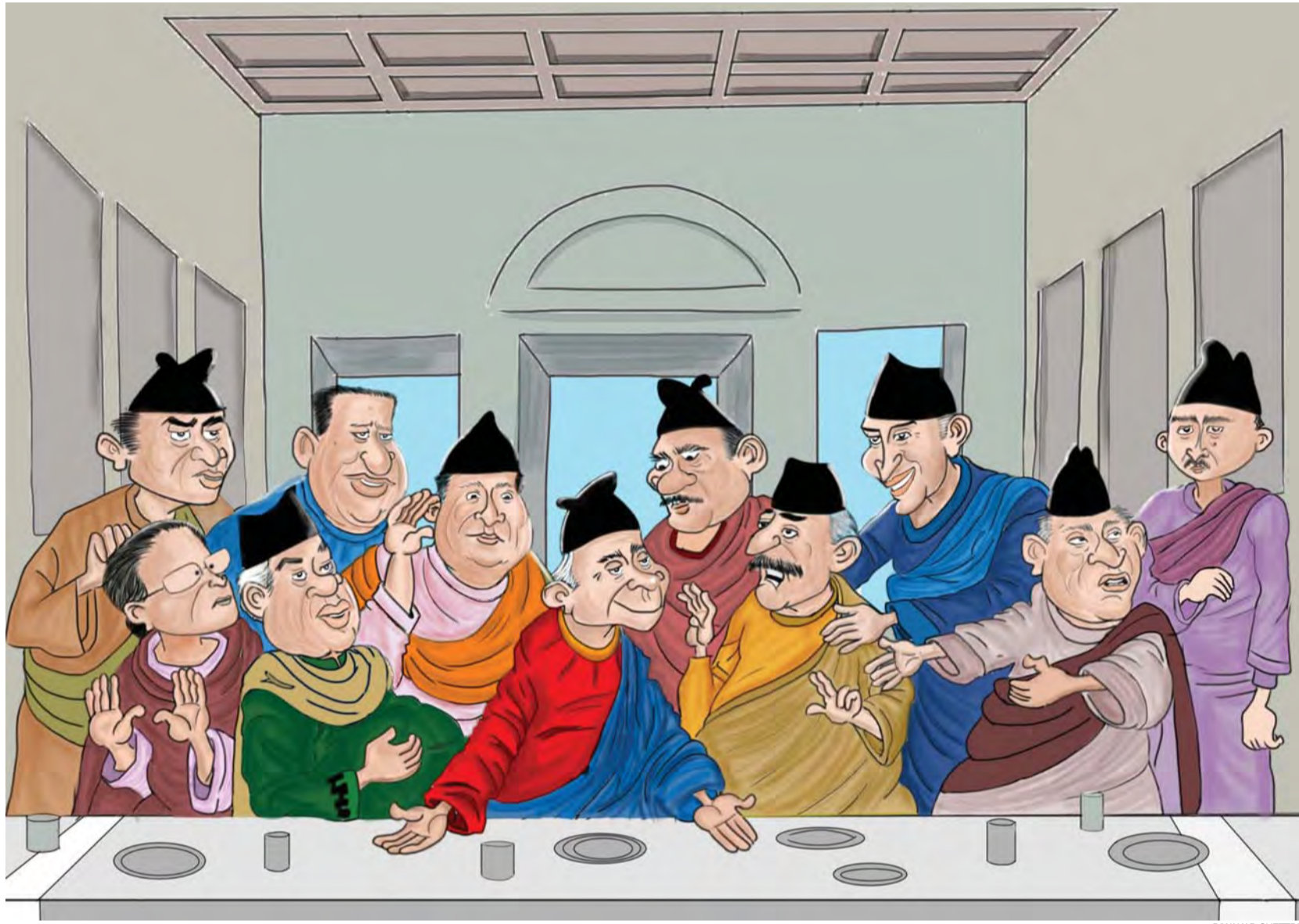
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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

The interim supper

By now we have learnt to read between the lips of our politicians: the opposite of what they say is usually true. So when all the main leaders show rare unity by vowing to hold elections by

June, we can be pretty sure it is not going to happen. Logistical, constitutional, and technical hurdles surround the chief election commissioner, who has the unenviable task of holding elections on time

and ensuring a fear free voting environment, which was not the case in the last elections. With the CPN-M and other fringe parties threatening to boycott and disrupt polls, another level of uncertainty

is added to the fate of June elections. And then there are larger questions of what difference elections are going to make this time when there has been no progress in finding a common ground on sensitive issues of federalism and state structure that stymied the CA last time. But we may just have to cross that bridge when we come to it. 

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The 10-day mountain bike race around the Annapurna Circuit is the highest and hardest in the world, but once again Nepali riders emerged victorious and showcased their endurance and technical skills.

page 16-17

Tetiquette

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page 7



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MAYBE NOT JUNE

You can't figure out what is really happening in Nepal these days by listening to the politicians. Reading, watching or listening to the media isn't much help either. You find out what is happening by what a leader doesn't say. In fact, the opposite of what a politician says is usually true.

When all the main leaders show rare unity by vowing to hold elections by June, you can be pretty sure it is not going to happen. At a meeting this week between the Chairman Khil Raj Regmi of the Interim Election Council and his newly appointed Election Commissioners, it was quite clear that the chances of kosher elections being held in June are becoming more problematic by the day.

In his first week in office, Chief Election Commissioner Nilkantha Upreti spent most of his time figuring out how much time he needs to prepare for polls. He faces logistical, constitutional, and technical hurdles that make it highly unlikely that elections, even if they are held in June, will be the kind that will take us to a CA that can write a constitution and guarantee stability.

The main premise in setting up the Regmi regime was to untangle the political knot by conducting elections. The polls are seen by many as a panacea, but a bruising campaign can further aggravate political polarisation if conducted with insufficient preparation. In normal times, the EC needs 120 days to hold elections after the date is announced, but these are not normal times.

The first thing the EC has to work on is to prepare a voters' list and lay out the rules for voting. Although the 11-point agreement between the parties allows for the children of those who got citizenship in 2007-8 to



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

All indications are that the Election Commission and the political apparatus will not be able to get their act together for polls in three months

vote without photo IDs, the Supreme Court has clearly ruled that those without citizenship papers should not vote. Then the Interim Constitution needs to be amended to allow the nearly 2 million voters who turned 18 after the 2008 elections. These measures are contentious, in a legal grey zone, and need to be passed by presidential ordinance.

The parties have agreed to a 491-member CA this time with 240 directly elected and 240 through proportional representation and another 11 members nominated by political parties. The security forces have insisted that elections be held in two phases. End-June is smack at the beginning of the monsoon and could present logistical issues.

The greatest uncertainty has been created by the CPN-M and other smaller parties which say they will not just boycott elections but also disrupt them. Then there are the larger questions of what difference elections are going to make this time when there has been no progress in finding a common ground on sensitive issues of federalism and state structure that stymied the CA last time. But we may just have to cross that bridge when we come to it.

Ex-US president Jimmy Carter is due here and the most important message he can give policy makers is to ensure that this time (unlike in 2008 when he prematurely declared voting free and fair) all stakeholders are committed to holding elections that are free from fear. He should try not to force elections in June if the EC and the parties are not ready and he should be reminded that Nepali leaders will again tell him what he wants to hear and not what they really want.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

STOLEN ANTIQUES

Thank you *Nepali Times* for a job well done ('Christie's removes stolen Nepal artworks', Kunda Dixit, #648). This is an indication of how powerful and useful journalism can be when used in the right way to find and reveal the truth to the public and concerned authorities.

Basudeb

- Collectors in Europe should not return the antique book covers to

myself. One question though: what made the donoros think it was a smart idea to build stairs on a hiking trail?

Shirish Acharya

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Well written column by Ram Kumar Bhandari ('Nothing but the truth', #648). There is one word in the middle of the article, a very important one describing something essential for all human beings on the planet. But sadly this word is missing in the

track, rescued the macro-economic situation by negotiating a loan from the IMF, cleaned up the bureaucracy, conducted fresh and proper elections, and handed the reins of power back to a democratically elected government. And guess what the democratically elected politicians did? They ruined the country.

Abbas

- So it looks like *NT* has also capitulated to the Indian-European-

This transitional government could get moral and other support from the people and Nepal's friends if it walks on the right path even if the party leaders go against it. This is a rare opportunity for the country to show how positive attitudes and actions can be used to solve hard problems facing a nation.

Babu

- Khil Raj Regmi cannot do much, even if he desires because of the obvious Baburam Bhattarai factor ('Unfree and unfair?' #648). Nor will he be able to vet the candidates as Bihari Krishna Shrestha advises. I only wish the retired bureaucrats, who are in command, can bring some stability and order. But even here one cannot be sure given bureaucracy's overall hand in pushing the country to the sorry state it is in.

Armugam

PREPPING FOR PRESCHOOL

The article 'Prepping for preschool' has really good information for parents and guardians who are looking for kindergarten schools (#648). But it would have been better if *NT* had mentioned the annual fees along with other facilities like teaching methods, seats available, and classroom sizes.

Yash Kumar

A GREAT LEAP FORWARD

I've always been optimistic about development of the country and the article boosted my positivism ('A great leap forward', #645).

Dipesh Rai

lives of ordinary Nepalis: respect.

Flexible

- The victims' wait for justice and truth and above all respect won't end for a very long time in this country where the perpetrators of both sides of the conflict are now scratching each others' backs to bury their past.

Madhav Thapa

REGMI REGIME

The editorial has hit the nail in the head ('Regmi regime, #648). The example of Moeen Qureshi shows that there's no need for an election to have an accountable, honest, and efficient government. So why keep harping on about democracy? Democracy has brought nothing but misery and poverty to Pakistan, as well as Nepal. Qureshi put Pakistan's economy back on

American Grand Plan to install the chief justice as the chief executive and destroy due process and separation of powers in Nepal.

Kim

- It might be a strange quirk of fate that Khil Raj Regmi, the most non-political man of Nepal, has to be chosen in order to act as the most relevant political figure to conclude the elections by the main political parties. And by watching his first moves, I believe he and his team are heading in the right direction. He is not only in charge of holding elections, but also here to make people believe again in politics and politicians who take politics as a tool to serve people and not to be served. Let's see what fate has in store for Regmi once he goes back to the Supreme Court as chief justice.

Anonymous



Nepal because it will be stolen again from the National Archives. It's better to have them in safekeeping at Christie's until Nepal becomes a cleaner and better governed country.

Kristof

CHANDRAGIRI

Thank you Dinesh Shrestha for letting us know about such a great route to hike around Kathmandu ('Kathmandu's best kept secret', #648). I can't wait for the cable car to get started so that my old parents can also visit the beautiful place.

Binay Pradhan

- One more excellent reason to get away from Kathmandu's cacophony. Dinesh's photos were stupendous, now I want to go and take some awesome pictures

Q OF THE WEEK

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word Nepal?

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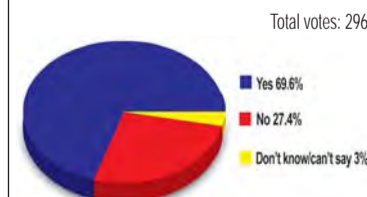
- Kang Li: The smell of incense at Thamel
- Prakash Parajuli: Home :)
- Abhushan Nepali: Mountains!
- Birat Bikram Niraula: Chaos
- Filip Noubel: Colour
- Amit Dhoj Khadka: Bad ass country
- Narbahadur Pun: Beautiful nature
- Corrie Reijnders: Dal bhat!
- Anupama Mahat: Peace!
- BonandAlb Hampton: Momos!
- Jo Wellington: Beauty and people
- Bimal Gurung: Earthquakes
- Avishek Sharma: Zero development
- Sigmund Stengel: Old vs new
- Peter Thomson: Corruption
- Basuki Jha: Strikes and load shedding

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- @DFID_Dominic: Potential
- @Praveshpc: Lots of potential
- @AmandaLuser: Hydropower potential

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll #649

Q. Do you think the SLC should be dropped for a more comprehensive high-school examination after grade 12?



Weekly Internet Poll # 650. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think polls are possible without convincing the 22 fringe parties?



The Holi land

Anger over corruption and neglect after 2008 rankles the Tarai psyche, but people still favour immediate polls

BIRATNAGAR - Nowhere in Nepal is Holi celebrated with such intensity and passion as it is in Nepal's southern plains.

On Wednesday, I found Salim Sheikh, Rahul Seikh, Dilip Jha, and Prince Rai celebrating Holi together in Tinpaini of Biratnagar. "Eid, Tihar or Holi, we are always together," Dilip said, patting Prince's back.



BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

The Seikh brothers have been celebrating Holi for as long as they can remember while for Prince, Holi has a whole new meaning after his family migrated down to Biratnagar from the eastern hills.

Last year's census report reveals that more than half the country's population now lives in the Tarai. This migration has made the already colourful Holi mosaic of the Tarai even more vibrant.

The four friends represent three sections of Nepali society: Muslim, Madhesi, and Pahadi. That they were celebrating Holi together, enjoying themselves, and cementing their bonds of friendship represents hope for the nation's future. It shows that if the politicians and their radical rhetoric don't poison the atmosphere, Nepalis from all ethnicities, religions, and regions will get along just fine.

However, the social aspect can be highly political, especially at a time when every section of the population is demanding its fair share of the national pie. Unless Madhesi aspirations are well-represented, this Holi's revelry could once more turn to violence on the streets.



Until two months ago, the Madhes was engulfed in frustration and anger. The dissolution of the CA with the lingering debate on federalism had dashed the hopes of many in the Tarai that historical wrongs would be righted by an inclusive constitution. But with the country on track for elections either in June or November and the agreement among the four main parties to ensure citizenship and voting rights in the Madhes, people here in the eastern plains have something to look forward to.

However, serious challenges remain. Many were suspicious about the Regmi-led government holding polls, but it is clear that only a technocratic government can ensure free, fair, and peaceful elections if all major players are willing to participate. But the top parties are about to repeat the mistake they made back in 2007 when the Girija Prasad Koirala-led government tried to force the country into elections without homework, triggering the Madhes Uprising.

Although popular sentiment this time seems to be in favour of immediate polls, the refusal of the Baidya-led CPN-Maoists, the Upendra Yadav-led Madhesi bloc, and the Limbuwans to support polls is already affecting preparations for elections. There are disturbing early signs of voter registration being disrupted.

On Tuesday, former Morcha leader JP Gupta who was recently released from jail after serving his corruption sentence, threatened to lead the Madhes into another revolt if his demands were not immediately met. Gupta pleaded his case in Saptari, the epicentre of the Madhes Uprising, arguing that he was politically victimised for standing firm on the Single Madhes demand. Not once did he show remorse for corruption or betrayal of the people's trust. His claim that he was charged while the 'big fish' were let off the hook, although convincing, does not take away his own culpability.

So when Gupta threatens to upset polls, one really wonders if it is for the common Madhesi that his heart bleeds or was he plotting this vendetta during long days in his jail cell. Political analyst CK Lal may well be right, when he told me: "What JP does now will be more about his own political destiny than about Madhes."

Anger over corruption and neglect by successive governments after 2008 is still raw in the Tarai psyche, but elections can offer a platform for healthy debate and ensure that demands of the Madhes are satisfied at the earliest. 🇳🇵

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Nepal can cash in on solar power while waiting for hydroelectric projects to come up

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

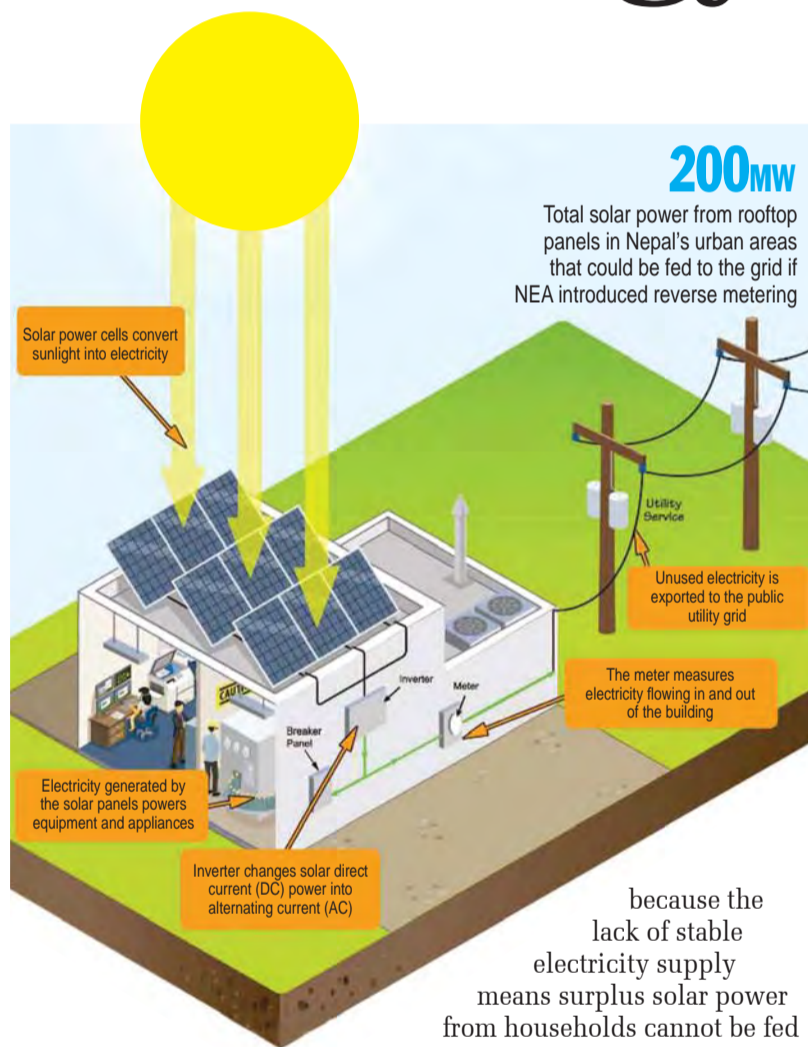
No alternative to alternative energy

BHRIKUTI RAI

If all the electricity generated by private solar cells in Nepal's urban areas is added up, it would total 200MW of electricity: more than Kali Gandaki IIA, Nepal's biggest hydropower plant. But officials at the main power utility in the country, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), still don't believe solar power is feasible even when most of its customers have switched to solar because of the shortage of hydro. One NEA executive told a conference last week: "Solar power is just ornamental."

After being badgered, NEA finally agreed last year to test a solar system to feed surplus daytime power into the grid through a system called net metering. The Kathmandu-based Centre for Energy Studies collaborated with the Swiss university SUPSI and successfully integrated grid-connected 1KW solar photovoltaic systems each at Pulchok Engineering Campus and the Rural Integrated Development Services (RIDS) Nepal and 3KW system at NEA's office in Baneswor.

Solar activists were also happy when NEA added sun power from the Sundarighat system (pic, above) to the national grid in January. The



680KW Japanese-built plant generates solar power for water treatment by the Kathmandu Valley Drinking Water Limited and feeds the surplus into the grid. The head of NEA's Power Trade Division, Sher Singh Bhat, is still not convinced.

"Solar energy is not commercially feasible and reverse metering is not viable

because the lack of stable electricity supply means surplus solar power from households cannot be fed into the national grid. Besides not everyone can afford to install large systems above 1KW."

Promoters of solar like Professor Jagan Nath Shrestha from Pulchok Engineering Campus which successfully demonstrated reverse metering, refutes these arguments.

He says there have to be other alternatives like solar while Nepali consumers wait another

five years for sufficient hydro-electricity.

"People are energy starved now and are paying up to Rs 30 per unit for diesel generated electricity, why wouldn't they pay half of that for solar? It's not about being green, it is a necessity," he says. He estimates that 72 gigawatt hours of power could be generated from just 10 per cent of Kathmandu's total area. If power generated by individual rooftop panels in urban areas of Nepal is added up, it would amount to 200MW of electricity. NEA's excuse that there are technical hurdles also doesn't hold water, experts say.

"NEA can easily buy surplus solar energy through reverse metering wherever they have dedicated feeders and encourage people to install solar panels," explains Ram Prasad Dhital, assistant director at the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC), which has been advocating subsidies for alternative energy. Dhital says that although the initial investment for solar power is high, so are the long-term returns.

NEA's Sher Singh Bhat, however, sticks to his argument that hydro energy is the only way ahead. He says power cuts will be history once Upper Tama Kosi (456MW) is completed in four years and hydropower will be much cheaper than solar. "We are also working with India to construct cross border high capacity line to import electricity to manage demand here until these larger projects are completed," says Bhat. This is the kind of argument that drives solar promoters up the wall.

"Yes, Tama Kosi is great, but by the time it is built demand will have risen by another

600MW. And what are we going to do till then?" asks Raj Kumar Thapa of Solar Solutions. He says the global price for photo voltaic cells has crashed and the cost per watt of solar power is going to go below \$1.

"The technology is getting cheaper by the day and we have the expertise. NEA could easily formulate policies to encourage people to become independent electricity producers and buy power from them," Thapa adds.

NEA insiders say the true reason for reluctance to install reverse metering is the pilferage, meter tampering, and corruption which the utility's powerful unions don't want to change. Former water resource minister Dipak Gyawali, who tried and failed 10 years ago to introduce time-of-day metering to reduce peak demand and also net metering, says: "There are institutional barriers to change and unless we unbundle generation, distribution, and transmission, there will be no answers."

The power shortage has increased demand for diesel and Nepal now imports Rs 93 billion worth of petroleum products a year from India: more than its total commodity exports of Rs 74 billion. An estimated 550MW of captive power is generated from diesel plants run by industries, hotels, and factories.

Jagan Nath Shrestha can't hide his frustration: "I was 10 when I first heard about how Nepal would sell electricity to India and become rich. I am now 63 and we have 14-hour power cuts daily. How much longer are we going to wait?"

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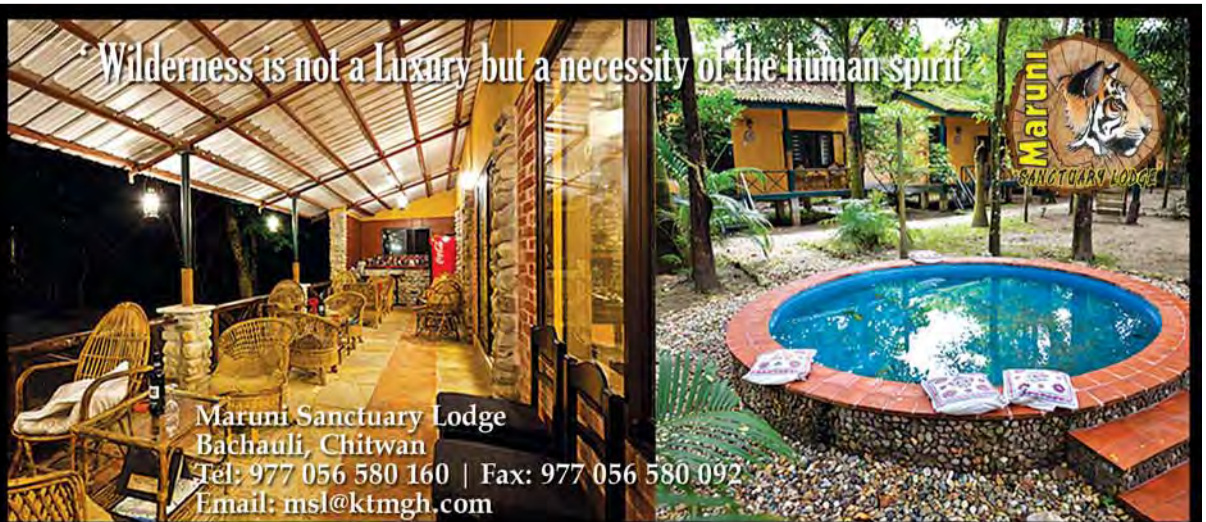
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Cairn may give up on Nepal

MARK WILLIAMSON IN EDINBURGH

The Scottish exploration firm that found a billion barrels of oil in India has indicated it may give up on Nepal without a big improvement in the situation in the country. Nine years after Cairn was awarded licences covering a swathe of southern Nepal, the company appears to be running out of patience with a country where it has been unable to start drilling amid continuing political instability.

"It's just unfortunate, we haven't been able to make progress," Chief Executive Simon Thomson told *Nepali Times* in Edinburgh on Tuesday. He made it clear that long-running talks between Cairn and successive governments in Kathmandu have done nothing to persuade the company that it will be safe to risk millions of dollars that it would cost to drill wells in Nepal.

"Despite having established a big plan and presented our credentials, it's been impossible to move forward," Thomson said, "the reason we were there in Nepal in the first place still remains. Whether we will be able to make progress is a



different matter."

The comments reflect frustration among insiders at Cairn about the obstacles the company has faced in a country where it had high hopes of making a big oil and gas find. Nepal contains the kind of under-explored territory on which Cairn believes it has an edge over giants like Shell.

The company made a series of bumper finds in Rajasthan state in India from 2004, while under the leadership of former Scottish rugby international Sir Bill Gammell. These propelled Cairn into the big time. But since selling a controlling stake in its Indian subsidiary to Vedanta Resources for \$5.4bn in 2011, Cairn's focus has shifted away from

South Asia.

The Scottish company has amassed a big portfolio of lower risk assets in its backyard in the North Sea. It has also acquired frontier exploration interests in areas ranging from the freezing waters off Greenland to the tourist playgrounds of Spain and Malta. On Tuesday Cairn said it is acquiring stakes in three blocks of Senegal in West Africa.

Even if Cairn decides to persevere in Nepal it could be months before it has gathered enough information to decide where to drill. It would take years to bring any find into production. Cairn made the giant Mangala find in Rajasthan in 2004, seven years after it started work in the state. Production from the field began in August 2009.

The company was awarded 100 per cent stake in five licences in Nepal's Tarai region in August 2004 on attractive terms. In August 2005, six months after former king Gyanendra seized political control, the company declared contractual force majeure, suspending its work commitments in view of the security situation. ❏

Mark Williamson is a Business Correspondent for *The Herald*, Scotland.

nepalitimes.com

Cairn still in wait-and-see mode, #589
Cairn strikes it big, #209

Hydro Solutions in US JV

Chicago-based renewable energy company, New Generation Power, this week signed an MoU with Nepal's Hydro Solutions to cooperate in exploiting up to 400MW of hydroelectric projects in Nepal.

New Generation Power is represented in Nepal by New York-based Nepal Infrastructure Consult (NIC) and will commission renewable energy projects in the country. It already has 3,000MW of projects in solar, biomass, wind, hydro, waste to energy, and geo-thermal in various parts of the world.



Hydro Solutions is a rapidly expanding hydropower company that works in identification and development including project engineering for energy infrastructure in Nepal. The company is involved in the development of projects with a cumulative capacity of over 500MW in Nepal.

The MoU was signed (pic, above) by Chirinjeev Kathuria, Chairman, and Nisha Joshi, Senior Vice-President (International) of NGP, Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, Executive Chairman of Hydro Solutions and Suman Neupane, President of NIC.

BIZ BRIEFS

Hot wheels

Agni Incorporated has launched Mahindra's new global sport utility vehicle XUV 500 in Nepal. Three models of XUV 500 - W6 2WD, W8 2WD, and W8 AWD - are available in the market.

Agni also inaugurated its new showroom and service centre operated by Balaju Auto Works.

Easy money

Mega Bank Nepal and Prabhu Money Transfer have started remittance service. With this new

partnership, money sent from abroad through Prabhu Money Transfer network can be received from all 28 branches of Mega Bank.

Education first

British Council Nepal awarded International Schools Award to nine schools in Nepal. According to the press release, the award acts as an accreditation framework for schools to record and evaluate their international work and embed it into the curriculum.

Cool times

CG Brand has launched new models of Air Cooler CG-A004.

According to the press release it has six strong blades with three speed controls and powerful motor with a one year warranty.

Flying partners

Ethihad Airways recognised 12 travel agencies in Nepal for their continuous support of the airline. The agencies were awarded in several categories including best travel agency of the year, best premium sales, and best share shift.

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Communalism and terrorism

GUEST COLUMN
Ajaz Ashraf

An Indian Supreme Court ruling this week underscored the state's inclination to crush terrorism but condone communalism

India's Supreme Court delivered a blow against terrorism through its verdict last week on those accused of masterminding the devastating series of blasts in Bombay, which hadn't yet been renamed Mumbai, on 12 March 1993.

It upheld in one instance the death penalty the trial court had earlier awarded to 12 and commuted to life in prison for the remaining 10 (one had died), which was also the quantum of punishment given to another 23.

For some, though, the judgement underscored the Indian state's inclination to crush terrorism and yet, ironically, condone communalism. It is ironical because both terrorism and communalism, despite definitions distinguishing the two, are predicated on harnessing violence in the pursuit of political goals.

The contradictory response of the Indian state is seen in its attitude to the serial bomb blasts and the Bombay riots of 1992-1993, which was sparked off by Muslims taking to the streets after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and backlash from Shiv Sena activists.

Considering the ominous



implications of allowing disaffection to roil the Muslims, you would have expected the Indian state to be even-handed in pursuing and punishing those responsible for the riots and blasts. The government set out in earnest to unravel the network behind the serial blasts, compelling the fugitive don Dawood into hiding and arraigning many of his foot-soldiers in the trial court. Subsequently, nearly a 100 were pronounced guilty in the Bombay blasts.

The state did not display similar zeal towards those who fomented the riots. Unlike

Dawood and his lieutenants, they weren't residing in another country, beyond the reach of the Indian state, but constituted the city's political class, including Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. An estimated 60 per cent of Bombay riot cases were closed forthwith, conviction was secured in three cases, all Muslims, which the Supreme Court subsequently set aside.

The Srikrishna commission recommended the re-opening of cases against Shiv Sena leaders and police officials. Thus, in 2009, Sena leader Madhukar Sarpotdar was sentenced to a year in prison, but he was

immediately granted bail and lodged an appeal against the verdict. He died in 2010 and didn't spend a day in jail. Former police commissioner RD Tyagi, accused of killing eight Muslims, was acquitted and the Congress government did not appeal against the verdict. Another officer, Nikhil Kapse, was convicted but the government secured a stay on the order from the Supreme Court.

Communalism rarely ever seeks to radically transform the state, wishing neither to diminish the powers vested in it nor the territory under its control nor its propensity to favour the class of those who control its levers. Indeed, the only demand Hindu communalists make on the state is that it should favour them over the minorities or remain passive during rioting, hoping to derive advantage from its numerical superiority. This is why the Hindu communalist doesn't rhetorically attack the state.

Terrorism, whether by secessionists or the ultra Left, seeks to challenge the nature of the state, its ideology, and power. For instance,

secessionism employs terror to wrest from the state's control a slice of territory, effectively undermining its supremacy. The ultra Left wants to alter the structure of the state as it exists, in the hope of ensuring it doesn't work for the benefit of a few.

In comparison, the Bombay blast masterminds had a limited agenda of punishing the state for facilitating the Hindu communalists in their attacks against Muslims. The state retaliated because its monopoly over coercive power was challenged. Yet the violence of Bal Thackeray's men was condoned because their ire was directed not against the Indian state, but the Muslims of Bombay.

Obviously, the Indian state's dichotomous response breeds alienation among Muslims, provoking some of them to employ terror, often at the behest of the ISI, to wreak vengeance against the Indian state. It is a vicious cycle of retribution from which it becomes difficult for the society to emerge, as India quite clearly hasn't, from the never-ending bombings in its cities. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

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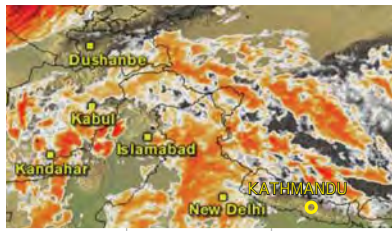


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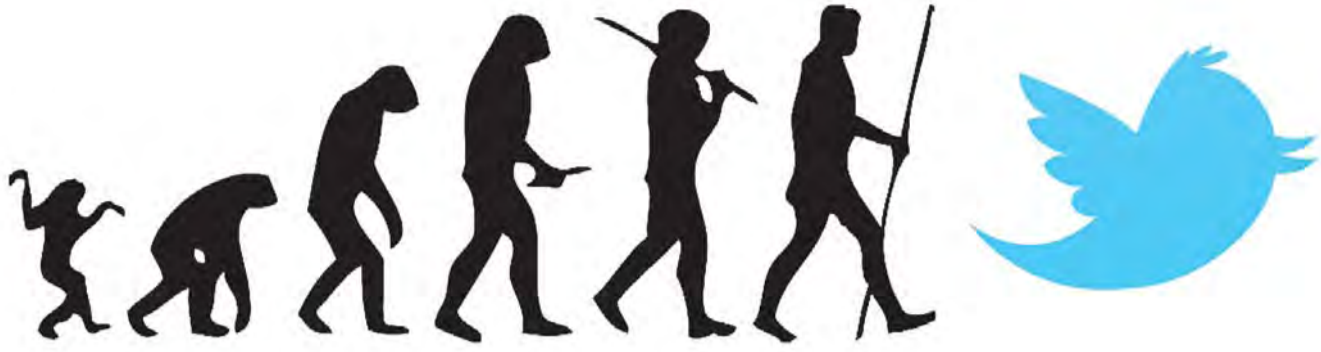
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The mercury crossed the 28 mark on Wednesday, marking the Valley's official entry into 'summer'. But the minimum temperature has been staying in the low double digits, keeping the nip in the air nights and mornings. This will continue into next week, when the maximum will edge closer to 30 Celsius. So far, the heat is not enough to generate convection systems along the Himalaya and the passing showers are whatever moisture is carried in by the westerlies condensing as it rises with the terrain. The weekend will see some brief violent storms in the high valleys. Sunday will be hot and sunny.



FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
27°	26°	26°
12°	12°	11°



Tweet away!

Is it a Facebook clone? Is it a blog? What should or should you not blurt out? Seven years after its birth we are still struggling to figure out how to interact with the little blue bird. The 140 character limit is the easy bit, but what about tetiquette? What separates the good twiples from the mannerless? We present you the definitive Twitter bible, study it religiously, and bask in the glory as you inch closer to Justin Bieber's 36 million.



Dos

- Make it personal. Unless you want people thinking you have zero personality, develop a character for your profile. Add a profile pic, a cover pic, and a short bio.
- Tweet about others' works too (alongside your own). We all love free publicity, but just not all the time.
- Be polite and remember the good manners your parents taught you applies on Twitter.
- Engage in conversations with people around you thank tweeps who refer or retweet you, say hi when they follow, and always reply to questions.
- Use humour, a lot. Funny equals followers. Ka-ching!

Donts

- Retweet compliments. A little self-promotion is acceptable, but the slope is extremely slippery. Leave the endless endorsements to businesses and celebrities.



- Tweet about your daily schedule. We don't need to know what time you go to the gym or take your morning loo-break.
- Ask people to RT. It makes you sound desperate. If they want to, they'll do it themselves.
- Overdo hashtags. Using too many makes it difficult to read, limit to three at most.
- Follow others just because you want them to follow you back.
- Turn Twitter into a battleground. Instead meet for coffee and engage in a few rounds arm wrestling.

Stay away if:

- Drunk or high: why lose your job/friends/lover/reputation in under 140 characters? #gosleep
- Newly in love: TDA is gross and you will lose your single followers. #getaroom
- Heartbroken: it may be the end of the world for you but it's just another work day for the rest of us. #celinedion
- Don't know who the current prime minister of Nepal is. Twitteratis can be extremely cruel towards those they think are not smart or witty enough. #survivalofthesmartest
- Your mom still washes your undergarments. #underage #hi5



TOP 10 NEPALI TWITTERATIS:

- Prabal Gurung @prabalgurung
89,725 followers, 11,691 tweets, 478 following
- Promise Tamang Phan @TamangPhan
38,363 followers, 5,035 tweets, 94 following
- Baburam Bhattarai @brb_laaldhwoj
24,515 followers, 135 tweets, 25 following
- Manisha Koirala @mkoirala
20,617 followers, 2,075 tweets, 0 following
- Rabindra Mishra @MishraRabindra
12,316 followers, 1,018 tweets, 182 following
- Narayan Wagle @narayanwagle
10,144 followers, 695 tweets, 457 following
- Narayan Shrestha @NrnShrestha
8,637 followers, 425 tweets, 226 following
- Kanak Mani Dixit @KanakManiDixit
8,293 followers, 515 tweets, 94 following
- Manjushree Thapa @manjushreethapa
7,325 followers, 3,670 tweets, 434 following
- Salokya @salokya
6,654 followers, 6,840 tweets, 303 following

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EVENTS



PRANAMAYA YOGA, immerse yourself in an extensive three-day yoga retreat with Yogatara.

Rs 24,000, 1 to 3 April, Neydo Monastery Resort, Pharping, 9802045484, info@pranamaya-yoga.com

Human rights film series, screening powerful documentaries throughout the month to create awareness on human rights and gender issues.

7 to 31 March, 7pm, Attic Bar, Uttara Dhoka, www.hrffn.org

Himalayan rush, run, swim, or cycle around Begnas Tal and promote healthy, community-based tourism around the lake.

30 March, Pokhara, 9851021852/9851102046

Backyard screenings, watch great cinema while enjoying delicious food.

Rs 100, 2 to 28 March, every Thursday, 6.30pm, Backyard Cafe, Jhamsikhel



BIKERS DAY OUT, get on your bikes and ride! 200 Enfielders will be riding from Kathmandu to Pokhara.

13 to 15 April, www.enfieldpokerrun.com



TONI'S NEPAL, on the 10th anniversary of Toni Hagen's death, Heritage Gallery has revived his classic photo-exhibition on Nepal, one that was held 20 years ago and inaugurated by Late King Birendra.

Runs till 31 March, Heritage Gallery, Toni Hagen House, Gachhen, Bhaktapur, (01)6613197

Inked for life, compete with tattoo artists from home and abroad at the 3rd International Tattoo Convention.

26 to 28 April, Yak and Yeti Hotel, 9841471448/9841849786

Photochop, get out of the comfortable confines of digital image manipulation and learn the art of photo-collage as done in the good old days.

Rs 1,000, 17 to 21 April, Sattya Arts, Jawalakhel, shreyans@sattya.org

Ettikai, doodles, drawings, art for sale, live drawing, and good food all evening.

29 March, 5.30pm, Thapathali

Australia day, glimpse the Australian way of life with music, food, and beverages from the land down under.

6 April, 2pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

Cross-cultural documentary workshop, learn from award-winning filmmaker Natasa Muntean how to develop informed, intelligent, and creative films that contribute directly to critical cultural practice.

Rs 2,000, 10 to 14 April, 10am to 5pm, Sattya Arts, Jawalakhel

Basantapur festival, celebrate the coming of Nepali New Year 2070.

12 to 13 April, Kathmandu Darbar Square



WITH LOVE FROM FRANCE, Image Ark Gallery invites you to a dual exhibition of French artists Nicholas Henry and Floriane de Lasse.

Runs till 28 March, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark Gallery, Patan, (01)5006665

DINING



VOOTOO, a delectable selection of Newari food, don't miss out on the sukuti. Lainchaur

Saigon Pho, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. Lajimpat



CAFEREENA, the extensive menu has something for everyone, try the famous chips chilli. Sherpa Mall, Darbar Marg

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

Haddock, big compound with ample parking space, its western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. Jhamsikhel, (01)5546431

Little Italy, turn vegetarian at this new Italian food chain and don't forget to end your meal with the chef's special chocolate bomb. Darbar Marg

The Heritage, escape the hodgepodge of the tourist hub as you relish delights like paella and panna cotta. Thamel

Buzz, the food at Buzz is so good and wholesome it will leave your palate buzzing. Baluwatar

Gaurishankar organic coffee, stop over for a freshly brewed cup of Nepali Arabica on your way to Bhotekosi. 38 Kilo, Kavre

Shangrila Kitchen, try the majestic Gyakok and a wide variety of cocktails. 9am to 10.30 pm, Hotel Tibet International, Boudha

Lorry's, a newly opened restaurant its bistecca ai funghi is a must try. Jhamsikhel



CAPITAL GRILL, this American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes. Bhatbhateni

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MUSIC



IDES OF MARCH, celebrate the underground scene in Kathmandu with more than a hint of nostalgia. *Rs 200, 30 March, 1pm, Purple Haze, Thamel*

Paleti, Srawan Mukarung's poetry meets Aavas's music at the next installment of the monthly music series.

Booking open, 29 March, 5:30pm, Nepa-laya, Kalikasthan, (01)4412469/395, paleti@nepalaya.com.np

Live at Cafe 32, live music and delicious food every Friday. *6pm onwards, Cafe 32, Battisputali, (01)4244231*

Inter college band competition, rock the living daylight out of your competitors and win the chance to cut an album of your own. *Rs 5,000, Bhrikuti Mandap, 1 May, 9813422986*

GETAWAYS



HAATIBAN RESORT, climb up to Chandragiri in the morning for a royal view of Kathmandu valley and jog down to the hotel for a relaxed evening.

Pharping, Kathmandu, (01)4371537/56

Dhulikhel Lodge Resort, located on a hilltop, the resort offers a magnificent vista of valleys, foothills, and mountains to the north. *Dhulikhel, (011) 490114/494, www.dhulikhellodgeresort.com*



HIMALAYAN WELLNESS CENTRE, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel.

Budhanilkantha, open all week, 9801066661, www.himalayanwellness.com.np



Return of the native

Neal International Indigenous Film Festival (NIFF) is ready to kick off its seventh annual festival and filmmakers from all backgrounds who have an interest in indigenous issues, knowledge, and culture are invited to apply.

Each year, NIFF explores indigenous themes and this year's program will focus on 'Equal Access and Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Media'. The selected films will be screened by Taiwan Indigenous Television and receive royalty from the station.

25 to 28 April, City Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, Exhibition Road (01)4102577
ifa_festivals@yahoo.com
www.ifanepal.org.np

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If you choose to spend a night here, you will be accommodated in one of the luxurious safari tents that are spread over the well landscaped premises, equipped with comfortable beds, giving you the sense of camping minus the eerie feeling of being in the actual woods. The adventure begins right at the entrance of the resort, as you are required to cross a 160 metre high suspension bridge which connects the main resort and the village to the main road.



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CAUTION AHEAD

Here are some 'red flags' you need to look out for that might indicate your child is autistic. ASD can sometimes be diagnosed as early as 14 months. If your baby shows two or more of these symptoms, visit your paediatrician as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and intervention is crucial in promoting your child's development.

Impairment in social interaction:

- Lack of appropriate eye gaze
- Lack of warm, joyful expressions
- Lack of sharing interest or enjoyment
- Lack of response to name

Impairment in communication:

- Lack of showing gestures
- Lack of coordination of nonverbal communication
- Unusual prosody (little variation in pitch, odd intonation, irregular rhythm, unusual voice quality)

Repetitive behaviours and restricted interests:

- Repetitive movements with objects
- Repetitive movements or posturing of body, arms, hands, or fingers

A for autism

Nepali parents don't have the knowledge or resources to take care of children with disorders like autism, but support is on its way

SULAIMAN DAUD
and CINDREY LIU

When Sunita Shrestha and Kapendra Amatya's six-year-old son was diagnosed with autism in 2008, the couple who are doctors by profession had no clue how to move ahead. Like Sunita and Kapendra, many parents in Nepal don't have the knowledge or resources to take care of children with developmental disorders.

"Can you imagine being a parent, having heard of autism, but with no access to any kind of help or service? We felt helpless," recalls Sunita, an anaesthetist at Bhaktapur Cancer Hospital.

While physical disabilities can be seen and easily identified, autism is 'invisible'. The government does not even recognise autism when issuing disability identity cards rendering autistic people ineligible

for state sponsored monthly allowance. And when children act aggressively, have trouble communicating or interacting with others, and engage in repetitive behaviour, parents wrongly blame bad temper or poor discipline for these symptoms. As a result, hundreds remain undiagnosed or are lumped in the 'mentally retarded' category and stigmatised for the rest of their lives. Since there is very little support for families, mothers in particular are often forced to quit their jobs to take care of their autistic children full-time.

Fortunately Sunita and her husband found a solution abroad. After undergoing a three month training course in Delhi, they started a parents' support group called Autism Care Nepal (ACN) in 2008 in Gairidhara. Run by parents with autistic children, ACN provides counselling and training in disability care for families as well as diagnostic

assessment tests. There are currently 15 students at the school and daycare centre, where they are taught art and music therapy and the older ones are given vocational training classes.

Among the parents working at ACN is Sijan Shakya who is the first autism education specialist in Nepal. "I had to go to India for three months for training. It was very difficult to leave my son for that long and not everyone can afford it," explains Sijan. "But there was no support system for families with autistic children, so I decided to do something about it."

Patan Community Based Rehabilitation Organisation (CBR) is another institution that serves children with autism and other neurological development disabilities. Established in 1995, classes are designed with the aim of eventually integrating students into mainstream schools. At CBR children develop physical and cognitive skills, build self-esteem,

and learn to make candles, artificial flowers, incense, and decorative items during their vocational training classes.

According to Autism Speaks, a science and advocacy organisation in the US, around 67 million people worldwide fall under the autism spectrum (ASD). There is no data on Nepal, but ACN estimates there are anywhere between 10,000 to 50,000 autistic children and adults in Nepal. Although the country is a member of the South Asian Autism Network, it has yet to fulfil its obligations.

However, there are hopeful signs. Recently, the Ministry of Education granted Rs 90,000 to ACN for teacher support. The organisation is also working with the ministry to conduct training workshops for teachers both in and out of Kathmandu. "The training helped build a bridge between me and my child," says Kreepa Shrestha, program leader at ACN. "Although it is a slow

process, my son can now express himself better. I can tell he is happier."

As the world gears up to celebrate Autism Awareness Day on 2 April, Nepal should look to provide opportunities and services tailored to autistic children so they can become fully productive members of society. Introducing mandatory autism screening for children aged 18-24 months like in the US is the first step in helping families and health care providers. A comprehensive health and education policy that calls for special schools and outlines ways to help integrate and support children with developmental disorders into mainstream schools and community should follow next. 🇳🇵

www.autismnepal.org
www.patancbr.org

nepalitimes.com

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इकोफेयरको विवरण

मिति: १२-१३-१४ अप्रिल २०१३

स्थान: नेपाल प्रज्ञा-प्रतिष्ठान परिसर, कमलादी, काठमाडौं

समय: १० बजेदेखि ५ बजेसम्म

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इमेल: ecofair@himalmedia.com | www.facebook.com/nepalitimes

Travelling north of Kathmandu along the Arniko Highway, it is hard to miss Yatiraj Timalasina's coffee bar. It is on top of a newly built five-storey building on the side of a mountain, complete with seminar hall and rooms.

And as if to remind visitors that success, like good coffee, is not instant, Yatiraj and his wife Nirmala serve freshly brewed mugs of the world's favourite beverage. Beans grown in Kavre, Nuwakot, Palpa, and Syangja are not just finding a growing market around the world, but Nepalis are increasingly developing a taste for good non-instant coffee.

For farmers like Yatiraj and his brother, Govinda, coffee has now replaced maize and vegetables as their principle cash crop. At first there was resistance from their own parents, but the two brothers persevered with their Arabica plantation and have become a model for other farmers in the region.

Their three acre farm on a hillside below Dhulikhel now has 2,000 coffee plants and the family earns up to Rs 800,000 a year from the coffee farm and the cafe. The Timalasina family's newfound prosperity is spreading the wealth around too, because they buy 100 litres of milk from 22 neighbouring families to serve with their coffee and also for milkshakes. Families in Kavre can now afford to send their children to better schools.



A coffee plant bears fruit two years after planting, but it takes up to five to ten years for the plants to be commercially viable. Raw coffee cherries are picked in early March and are first wet-processed, then washed and left to dry. After their husks are removed, the green beans are roasted for 30 minutes (Nirmala, pic left) and then ground into fine, fresh coffee powder that sells at Rs 1,000 per kg.

The Timalasinas have not only won admirers but have also hit on a novel but simple business recipe: serve coffee during the cold seasons and lassi (milkshake) during the summer.

Because of the home-made do-it-yourself production and packaging methods, Timalasinas' coffee harvest is not yet standardised for export. But Yatiraj, who is now a certified coffee trainer and pulping operator, says he wants to change

BEAN THERE, DONE THAT

A new revolution is brewing in rural Nepal as farmers find a new cash crop

SUNIR PANDEY in KAVRE

the attitudes of Nepalis who still favour tea over coffee so that Nepali coffee farmers get encouraged by high domestic demand.

Says Yatiraj: "The real test for small-scale farmers like us will come if my children, when they grow up, feel they are too important to serve coffee to customers." But for now,

everyone from grandfather to grandchild in the Timalasina household is hooked to the bean that has made them prosperous.

HOME BREW MOKA POT

Italian Alfonso Bialetti was watching his wife do laundry when he imagined the workings of the moka pot: boiling water in the lower chamber rushes up through a tight sieve containing coffee-grounds and then condenses in upper chamber. Voila, the Bialetti Moka Espresso was born.



- Fill the bottom with (preheated) water
- Fill basket with freshly ground coffee
- Place on heat
- Remove as soon as coffee gurgles, don't boil
- Pour into thin (preheated) China clay cups



TOP SIX DISTRICTS

Coffee thrives from 800-1,500m where there is no frost in winter. The soil needs to be deep, fertile, and well drained with high organic content. Coffee is grown in 1,800 hectares in Nepal and total production was reported to be 523 metric tons last year. Annual production of beans across the country in metric ton is shown below on the map.

Nepal exported

280 metric tons of coffee last year worth

Rs 93,000,000

TOP IMPORTERS:

Germany, China, Japan, Korea

24

Kaski

15

Lamjung

49

Syangja

23

Palpa

48

Lalitpur

35

Kavre

Others: 216

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The Perks of Being a Wallflower



Stephen Chbosky's first film, released last year and based on a novel by the same name, also written by him in 1999, is one of the more charming coming of age films.

At a time when we are constantly bombarded with American high school films and tv series always featuring mean girls (terrifyingly perfect featured high school cheerleader alpha females who rip apart the innocent bespectacled literary nerd girl), a wall of football jocks versus the one shrimpy (sometimes gay) and terrified young male science nerd, and, of course, the obligatory 'good teacher', it is refreshing to see this much overused subject taken on by a sensitive, intelligent director who knows how to portray teenage angst with a feather light touch while encompassing both the beauty and pain of that particular time in a person's life.

The strength of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is undeniably in its writing. Chbosky has done a brilliant job of adapting his own



novel, an epistolary piece, and therefore not the easiest form to translate into screenplay. Episodic in nature, the story follows the high school careers of three friends: Charlie, played by Logan Lerman, Sam (Emma Watson), and her stepbrother Patrick (Ezra Miller).

Charlie has just started his freshman year at high school. Nervous and very shy, it is purely by accidental good fortune that he is picked up and nurtured by Sam and Patrick, high school seniors who are undeniably on the 'cool' scene.

While 'cool' in *Gossip Girl* means incredibly well dressed and terribly snotty, 'cool' in *The Perks of being a Wallflower* means being intelligent, kind, brave, and having excellent taste in music. In this way, *Wallflower* is a throwback to the Enid Blyton novels, perpetuated later, of course, by JK Rowling in the Harry Potter novels where decency reigns above all else and striving for knowledge does not necessarily make you a 'nerd'.

For a first time director, Chbosky has a knack for the visual and while the film is not a cinematic masterpiece, it has many memorable scenes made alive by the acting of the young cast, all of whom are very good,

Lerman in particular excels as the young and loyal Charlie.

As the school year progresses, Charlie inevitably falls in love with the vivacious Sam and becomes confidante to Patrick who reveals that not only is he gay, he is dating the star quarterback of the football team, the tall, handsome, and very masculine seeming Brad.

In another kind of high school film the above combination would have resulted in catfights, blame games, and furious pretty girls behaving their worst. Instead, while there is a fist fight, the problems of these young teenagers are resolved with quiet drama but no particular histrionics.

This in itself would have elevated *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* to another level. However, with the combination of its carefully chosen nostalgic, evocative music (David Bowie, New Order, The Smiths, Sonic Youth), its three dimensional, immensely likeable characters, and its ability to take one right back to one's teenage years (whether you like it or not) the film becomes a special, memorable depiction of a time that most of us want to forget, yet still cherish in perverse ways in our unreliable memories.

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

GIZMO by YANTRICK

A green sun

After reading reviews of the new BlackBerry Z10, a Made in Thailand vibrator, and a killer mouse, Yantrick this week turns readers' attention to a gadget that is handy, affordable, and highly relevant for energy-starved Nepal.

It is called simply, Light, because that is what it is: a simple solar-powered light for those long, dark load shedding hours. Designed by Nepali engineer Sujit Acharya and Made in China, the Light is a sturdy contraption that is made to withstand rugged use in rural Nepal. But after trying it out for a few days in Kathmandu, Yantrick finds it the best system for urban Nepal as well – especially because the cities suffer more hours of power cuts at night than rural areas which have local microhydro.

Acharya has added other features besides the light that he thinks are useful for us powerless Nepalis: a FM radio with scanner, a speaker for your MP3 player, a digital clock with alarm, a mobile charger with multiple adapters, and even a siren. The LED light consumes very little power and has five settings for optimum brightness: normal, medium, high beam, bed light, and night light. The Light can be charged from mains power.

We had to point the panel to the sun and the 6V lead acid battery was fully charged within three hours. The manual says you have to charge the battery fully every 15 days even if you are not using it to extend the battery life, which is about four years if used properly. The unit is dust and water-proof, and can give 24 hours of illumination on a full charge.



At Rs 3,100 and with a one year warranty, the Light is a good buy that lets you say good bye to darkness. On the down side, the radio is kind of primitive and could easily have been integrated with the clock to allow the user to see the frequency of the FM band been tuned into. As it is, you are forced to scan blindly, channel hopping until you recognise the melodious voice of your favourite RJ on

Hits FM. The size and shape is a bit unwieldy, although the handle seems to have been ergonomically designed. Would have made a lot more sense if the light switch was on top of the handle so it could be turned on and off with the thumb while (let's say) we were trying to find our way to the outhouse while on a reporting assignment in rural Nepal.

"Forty per cent of Nepalis don't have access to electricity and the ones that do have to deal with increasing load shedding, so the solar lamp is ideal for both rural and urban Nepal," Acharya told Yantrick, "also, if you calculate how much you would spend on kerosene and candles, you will find that the light pays for itself in a year's time."

One way to slash the cost further may be to lose the siren, which isn't much use and Acharya says the new model won't have it. However, he is working on a solar light-radio that has an inbuilt earthquake alarm that gives users up to 30 second warning before the big shock arrives. Acharya's team got its Chinese patent for the solar lamp and will be adding more units into the Nepal market where 3,000 have already been sold.

YANTRICK'S VERDICT: Great light backup for the house, for trips outside the city, camping trips, and as a convenient way to save the cost of batteries. Can't wait for the one with an earthquake alarm. And come to think of it, the Light will be handy in a post-earthquake scenario as well.



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One of us daughters and sons

When Prajwal Parajuly's *The Gurkha's Daughter* rapidly flew off the shelves (it's already in its first reprint) and garnered rave reviews everywhere, readers were left with one burning question: is it really that good? Basically, yes, yes it is.

The Gurkha's Daughter is a collection of short stories that depicts the life of average Nepalis and those of Nepali-origin spread from Kathmandu to Kalimpong and Gangtok to New York. Summaries of the stories may not compel you to buy the book—a young cleft-lipped housemaid considering running away in her quest for the Bollywood dream, the daughter of a wealthy family stealing, a disintegrating father-daughter relationship - which all, in some form or another, address common topics of caste, culture, identity, and our society.

So what then makes Parajuly stand out? The most obvious: he is talented and uses novel modes of presentation. He doesn't waste time inking the beauties of the Himalayan landscape, but rather focuses on the characters, the true

heroes of his stories. Unlike some master storytellers, Parajuly may not leave you drooling over particular ensembles of words; on the contrary, his style is so simplistic that it would fail to impress if the words weren't executed to perfection. To his credit, he doesn't just write. He writes incredibly well.

Though there is some criticism to be made about the almost unoriginal content (how many more stories of low/middle-class Nepalis are we going to have to read?), Parajuly manages to succeed where many have failed: his stories are actually convincing. While others have attempted to tell the tale of everyday lives, Parajuly portrays characters and scenarios that Nepalis can identify with, non-Nepalis can learn from without being misled, and that everyone can enjoy. There is no selling out, no vanity, or pretence—all of the stories are absolutely believable.

At first, the tales may leave you unsatisfied—one questions if the author didn't reach the depths he could have. But it becomes quickly apparent that wanting more is the

carefully crafted effect of realistic characters who instill emotional attachments. And this is where Parajuly collects another brownie point—it's surprising how fast one forgets the writer. The man behind the words ceases to exist as story after story, each character—be it little girls in their world of play, young men begrudgingly accommodating extended families, or a shamed Nepali-Bhutanese woman seeking asylum in the US—lingers long after the book ends.

For Parajuly, when his debut novel, *The Land Where I Flee*, releases next year, his biggest challenge will be to match the tremendous expectations of his readers. **Shreya Thapa**



The Gurkha's Daughter
Prajwal Parajuly
Publisher Quercus
Pages: 272
Rs 800

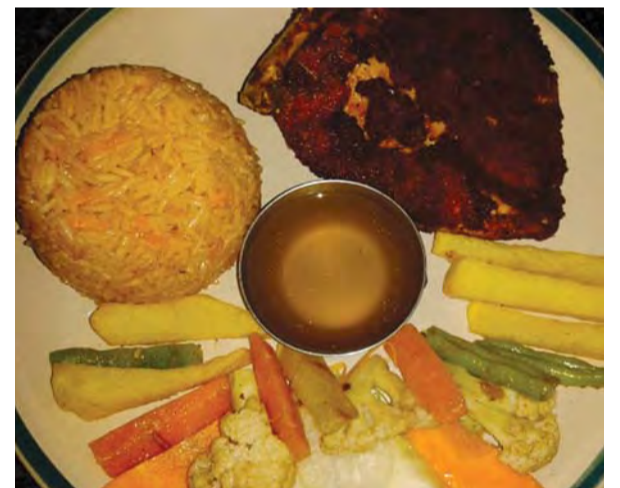


SOMEPLACE ELSE

with Reggae's menu. I usually just order my routine of momos and chips chilli and wash them down with rum and coke. Last week, after a long day at work, I needed something slightly more fulfilling.

We started our night with Jimmy's recommendation. The chicken cordon bleu (Rs 300), a Reggae special, was in one word divine. The perfect finger food, the pieces of chicken coated in cornflower, deep fried with cheese oozing from the centre, was an instant hit among all five of us at the table, and many other hungry bar hoppers as the owner let us know. Next up we had every tipsy person's favourite comfort food: salami pizza (Rs 250). A crispy thin crust pizza with generous toppings of salami and mozzarella went well with our drinks and was enough for three to share.

The highlight of our meal, however, was honey chicken with lemon sauce (Rs 280). Accompanied by a generous heap of sweet rice (almost like kesar pulao served during pujas), the deep fried chicken was crispy and well done. A side of cauliflower, cucumber, carrot, and fries which although a tad salty provided the



TSERING DOLKER

REGGAE BAR

much needed crunch for the dish. And if you prefer your chicken a little sweeter, you can drizzle the honey on the side.

In between stuffing ourselves, we dabbled in Reggae's eclectic range of cocktails. Though sex on the pub (Rs 385) was too fruity and cough-syrupy for our liking, what followed was spectacular. True to its name, the shots of multiple orgasm (Rs 330) made us woozy

instantly and the strong, but good burn of Baileys and almond liquor warmed us in all the right places. We kept the night alive with Cuba Libre (Rs 355) which means free Cuba in Spanish. The coca, lime, and white-rum mix, called rum and coke in everyday parlance, was as good at Reggae as one would imagine it may have tasted when first made in Cuba.

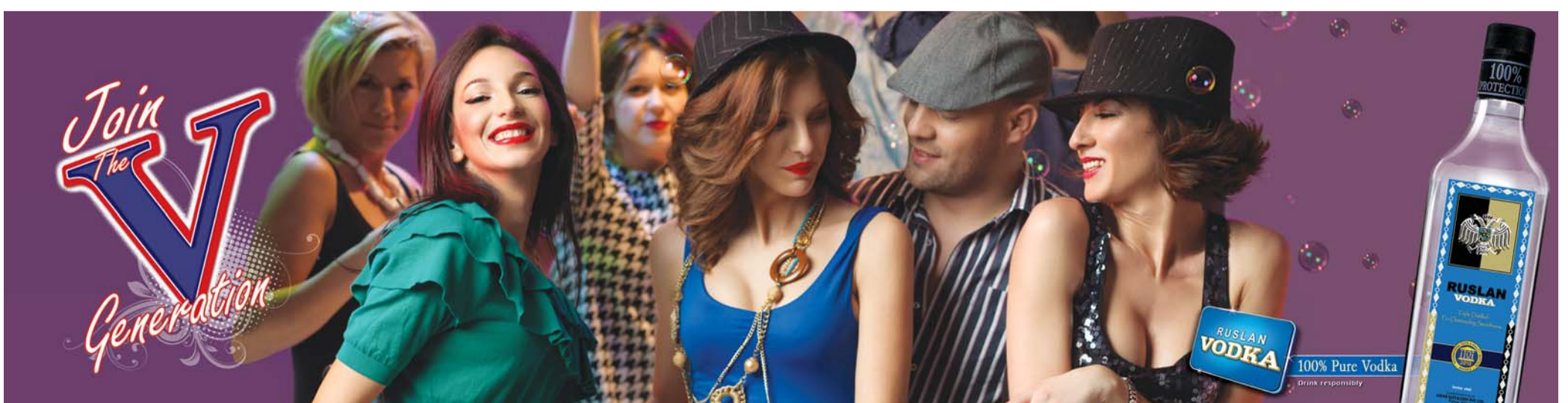
What makes this watering

hole so well-loved is its chilled ambiance and music. Reggae's house band, Plan B, plays on Thursdays and if you can coax the boys, they might just let you do your 'happy' rendition of *Sex on Fire*. If you're looking for a good time and want to avoid underage brats who ambush Thamel every Friday, head to Reggae on Thursdays. **TSERING DOLKER**

How to get there: find your way to Hot Breads at Thamel chok, then turn left. Reggae is located on the third floor opposite Aqua Java Zing, next to a book store.

The Thamel experience is incomplete without a visit to Reggae Bar. Started in 2008 by Jimmy Gurung, who once used to scratch discs for a living, Reggae is a melting pot of sorts and a Friday night home for locals, Lonely Planet loyalists, hippies, embassy folks, bankers, and the NGO crowd. Unlike other joints in the Valley, which are complete bores during the weekdays, this watering hole is alive even on Thursdays as I found out this past week.

I have been a regular here for years, but never really bothered



Alcohol to the rescue



SUNIR PANDEY



DHAVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Washing hands with soap after every checkup is one of the simplest hygiene habits health workers need to follow to prevent the spread of diseases. But hundreds of Nepali doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers who work in cities and villages face acute water shortage. At other places they may be using dirty towels to dry their hands which defeats the whole purpose or soaps may be missing.

Even in developed countries where there is no shortage of water (or soaps), many healthcare practitioners fail to wash their hands as regularly as they should because they don't want their hands to 'dry up'. A 50ml pocket-sized bottle of alcohol is the answer to boosting this appallingly low compliance rate.

Alcohol's antiseptic properties have been known for thousands of years. The Egyptians used wine as a preservative for their mummies. Although surgeons began using alcohol from the early 1900s as hand disinfectant, it was replaced by antimicrobial soap in the 1950s. However, alcohol has managed to make an

impressive comeback in the last five years.

Common hand sanitisers like Purell (one of the first American companies to produce alcohol-based hand antiseptic) contain about 60 to 70 per cent alcohol, which is counterintuitively more effective than pure alcohol. This concentration rapidly kills many kinds of bacteria and inactivates influenza and other viruses. These alcohol based hand rubs also have high moisture content which helps prevent dryness and irritation.

In 2002, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA, after reviewing accumulating scientific evidence rewrote its Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings guideline. The report stated that alcohol based products were better for standard hand washing than soap. Several years later, the World Health Organisation also reaffirmed this fact.

Small enough to carry in handbags or pockets, easy to use, and reasonably priced at Rs 350 for a large 500ml bottle, this revolutionary disinfectant needs to be targeted not only towards health professionals but also the general public. In our country where the habit of washing hands with soap is finally catching up after years of awareness campaigns, hand sanitisers will be useful and complement the use of soap and water.

HAPPENINGS

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BIKASH DWARE

NEW JOB: Newly appointed chief election commissioner Nilkantha Upreti (left) administers the oath of office to four commissioners at Shital Niwas on Monday.



BIKRAM RAI

HOLI DAY: Youngsters with face paint celebrate Holi in Basantapur on Wednesday.



CINDREY LIU

JOY RIDE: Teenagers enjoy the Columbus ride at Kathmandu Fun Park in Bhrikutimandap on Sunday.



JAYA AMATYA

LET THE SUNSHINE IN: An elderly woman dries maize in the sun in Ghurjung on the way to Annapurna Base Camp.

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Advantage, right

In 2010, Kamal Thapa, chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-N) won the all-India veterans' tennis tournament under the 45+ age group in Delhi, beating third seed M Suresh of Andhra Pradesh 6-2, 6-3. But it isn't just the tennis court where Kamal Thapa is serving aces.

The Himalmedia Public Opinion Poll 2013 shows a remarkable surge in Thapa's popularity, beating even Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Sher Bahadur Deuba in straight sets (see Nepali Times #647). Thapa's consistent stance and fiery oratory have given him unparalleled crowd-pulling qualities in the post-monarchy era.

Thapa traces his ancestry 11 generations back to generals pre-Prithvi Narayan Shah. He is the first in his family who didn't go into the army. In the last six years, he has emerged from a royal-tainted past seemingly unscathed. If the next election is held in June and he plays his cards right, Thapa may even have the potential to grab a chunk of the votes from half the respondents in the polls who were undecided.

Thapa admits privately that he may do even better if he jettisons his support for the monarchy and sticks to a Hindu revivalist agenda, but adds that as a matter of principle he won't. But even by wooing voters disgruntled with the current crop of leaders, he could amass quite a big following. If he can also lay hands on part of the block vote of three-quarters of Nepalis who seem to think ethnicity-based federalism is a bad idea, then Thapa has a good chance to make it to the top ranks.

However, if mainstream parties, especially the NC and UML can re-invent themselves, go beyond the stale rhetoric of 'defending democracy from the Maoists', and put up fresh young faces, it will spoil Thapa's chances. The support for Kamal Thapa and the RPP-N is a reaction to the fecklessness of the mainstream centre right, not an inherent pull of his Hindu-monarchy agenda.

Nepali Times' Kunda Dixit invited Kamal Thapa for a game of tennis and an interview last week. Thapa beat Dixit 6-0.

Nepali Times: Where do you see your party in the current political set-up?

Kamal Thapa: We want to establish ourselves on the national level as a conservative party with a centre-right leaning. And for that we are making radical changes in our central committee. We have replaced those with 'outdated' ideologies with people like former secretary Khagendra Basnet and retired army general Bharat Rayamajhi among others.

What about women?

Yes we have very few female members at the moment. We are worried there might be a conflict between the old guard and the young so we haven't been able to fully integrate the new members yet. In the next three months we aim to have 33 per cent women in the party.

How was your rath yatra?

It was much better than we had expected, but we were disappointed by the scant media coverage.

It seems like RPP-N is slowly renouncing its nationalistic ideology?

Hindutva and monarchy are both closely linked to nationalism. For now our focus is on Hindutva not as religion, but as an identity. Today's youth are aware about their identities.

Are you trying to mix religion and politics?

Mixing religion and politics won't work in the 21st century. However, since politics of the past few years has tried to completely erase Nepal's Hindu identity, our demands are legitimate in this context. We are not asking for religious laws or for the state to be run on Hindu decree or for Hindus to be given special privileges. All we are saying is that people should not be forced to convert.

But won't harping on religion disturb communal harmony in the country?

If our demands aren't addressed on time then there might be conflict. You can't have peace by ignoring the faith and identity of 94 per cent of Nepalis.

Won't demanding a Hindu state put Nepal's nationalism in danger through interference of the Hindu right in India?

Hindutva does not belong only to India. Nepal is the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Kirat. It's natural for the more



BIKRAM RAI

than one billion Hindus across the world to want to make Nepal the centre of their faith.

Are there any links between India's Hindu right and your party?

No, not at all. In fact I have refused to meet many religious leaders from India even when people encouraged me. I don't believe you need the blessings of foreigners to be politically active in Nepal. If others want to meet Indian leaders it's their choice, I am trying to move ahead in my way.

But support for Hindutva makes your movement a religious one, right?

All we are saying is Nepal should be reinstated as a Hindu state. But we are not turning into religious leaders or saints.

What relation do you see between Hindutva and monarchy?

Kings play a central role in Hindu theology, so there is definitely a connection there, but it's important to point out that Hindutva and state system are different. As a party based on 'conservative philosophy' we promote a Hindu state with the king as its head. And given Nepal's geopolitical, religious, socio-cultural, and current situation, we feel the monarchy is imperative.

Don't you think supporting a traditional institution like the monarchy will hold back political development?

We are in favour of democracy with a new, improved form of monarchy. After the abolishment of monarchy, Nepal is in an abysmal state in the hands of extreme leftists, which proves we are right.

How long will you carry on with your 'king' agenda?

I prefer calling myself a nationalist rather than a monarchist. The country needs a king and democracy. The monarchy was removed through conspiracies and I have been protesting against it.

But wasn't the royal massacre a reason for the demise of the monarchy?

There were plenty of rumours about the king after the royal massacre. But all that was planned by the Maoists and other parties after they realised that they couldn't gain total power with the king still around.

What about Gyanendra Shah's role in his own downfall?

Forming a cabinet under his leadership was the biggest mistake and not being able to win the confidence of the international community and political parties was another one.

Do you feel responsible for the collapse of the constitutional monarchy?

There is no use talking about the past. I had to stand by my party's line. But I have to accept my weaknesses and learn from mistakes.

How is your relationship with the former king?

It is really good, however not the way Nepali media portrays it. We are both on our own.

Do you see any possibility of working with 'panches'?

We won't be uniting any time soon, but we are looking into other opportunities.

The UCPN(M) and RPP-N are similar in many ways. Do you think the two parties could come together?

The two parties have many differences in the long-term, but at the moment we both need elections. Working together could be a possibility. But calling the UCPN(M) a nationalist party is a bit far-fetched.

The recent Himalmedia Public Opinion Poll shows a rise in your popularity, what might have led to this?

Our party has stood firm on its agenda. We are not just a party that is trying to reinstate Nepal as a Hindu state, we have a clear road map with a vision to transform the country socially, economically, and politically.

How many seats do you hope to win in the upcoming polls?

It all depends on how effective our campaigns are and how charismatic our candidates are. But as the Himal poll stated, it is certain the field is now wide open.

So how hopeful are you about elections?

We are very hopeful about it. Even a recent report by IDA put us fourth after the NC, UML, and UCPN(M).

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YAK ATTACK



ALL PICS: SAMIR JUNG THAPA

TYLER MCMAHON in MANANG

The 10-day mountain bike race around the Annapurna Circuit is the highest and hardest in the world. I am a very fit cyclist and experienced rider, but when I took part in the race last year it was the most challenging thing I had ever done. Which is why I came back in 2013 to participate in the seventh edition of the North Face Yak Attack.

This year's race saw some of the hottest days on the first four stages in race history and the most snow on the higher stages. After the first four days from Kathmandu to Besisahar, the fifth stage was turned into a group ride because of unscheduled blasting by Army engineers on the new Besisahar to Taal road.

Stage six, Taal to Chame (2570m), was quicker this year because the road extended the whole way and the hike-a-bike component was removed. The newly-constructed, steep and rocky-road was longer and allowed mountain biking in its purest form: bikers navigated it better than motorbikes and jeeps.

From Chame to Manang (3540m) there was significantly more snow and mud than previous years, making the race more fun for many and slower for all. UK rider Neil Cottam crashed out of the race with a dislocated shoulder, yet after



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2013

Nepali riders once again excel in the highest, hardest, and most extreme mountain bike race in the world

Nepal shining

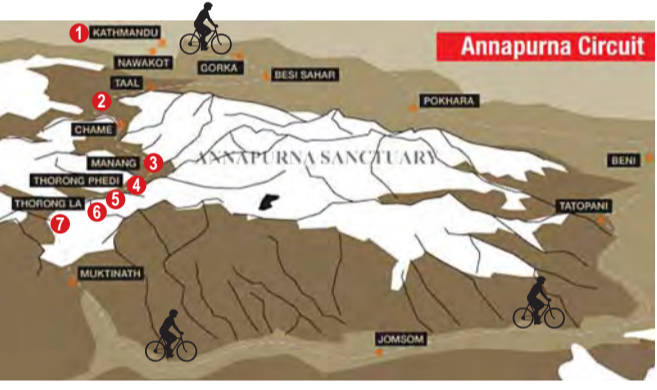
The real story of Yak Attack 2013 was the continued dominance of Nepali riders. Narayan Gopal Maharjan became the 5th Nepali to win Yak Attack, while defending 3-time champion, Ajay Pandit Chhetri, finished in 2nd. Young Aayman Tamang, only 19-years-old, rounded out the podium.



Every year the competition gets stronger with more international professionals and amateurs taking part, yet every year the Nepali riders illustrate their strength at all altitudes, any terrain, and at any temperature. These riders have immense potential to shine on the world stage and perhaps with proper training could compete in the 2016 Olympics in Rio.

"This is my seventh time racing the Yak Attack," Chhetri told *Nepali Times*, "everything has improved over time, the track, the race, the riders. I couldn't win this year because of injury while racing in Europe, but I am happy I came second. My

friend Narayan Gopal winning also makes me happy. Next year promises to be an even harder race. Let's see what happens."



popping his shoulder back in continued to trek the rest of the race.

Reaching Phedi (4,450m), riders were greeted by a blizzard that dumped 15cm of snow. There was tense anticipation of whether Thorung La would be passable at all. We woke up at 4 AM to clear skies and no additional snow. The snow was waist deep on the pass at Thorung and it resembled a mountaineering expedition with the wrong equipment rather than a bicycle race. Two riders suffering from snow blindness and had to drop out.

The final stage from Kagbeni to Tatopani was cut short and turned into a group ride due to an international competitor colliding with a vehicle and others had to wait for the medical team to

arrive. He was ok.

The new and variable challenges each year are what make Yak Attack unique. Mountain Bike UK has acknowledged this as the fifth hardest race in the world, not because of the distance or technicality, but because of the altitude, snow, hike-a-bike, temperature extremes, and other unforeseeable challenges.

But most of all, it has allowed Nepali riders to showcase their endurance and technical skills and be recognised on the international stage. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

Yak attack, #597

Video clip of race

ग्यासको भाउ बढ्यो रे ! मलाई के थाहा ?

रुकमणी बहिनीले त आफ्नो घरमै बायो-ग्यासको उत्पादन गरी बाह्रै महिना त्यसबाटै सस्तोमा इन्धनको प्रयोग गर्छिन् । के अब हामी मिलेर पुरै नेपाललाई नै न्यून मूल्यमा इन्धन उपलब्ध गराउन सक्दैनौं त ? नेपाललाई ऊर्जामा आत्मनिर्भर बनाउनको लागि फोहरबाट ऊर्जा उत्पादन गर्ने आफ्ना परियोजनाका उपायहरू www.w2ebazaar.org.np वा www.aepc.gov.np मा २०७० वैशाख ६ गते भित्र पठाउनुहोस् । उत्कृष्ट उपायहरूलाई २०७० वैशाख १३ गते आयोजना हुने ऊर्जा बजारमा प्रस्तुत गर्ने मौका प्रदान गरिनेछ ।

**अब ठूलो काम गर्ने बेला भएको छ ।
फोहर भित्र छ शक्ति, तपाईं निकाल्नुस् जुक्ति !**

“It’s not as if we killed everyone”



CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: Remains of the passenger bus that was bombed by the Maoists in Madi, Chitwan in 2005.

Only yesterday the head of UNHCR Navi Pillay said in a press statement the TRC ordinance fails to meet international standards.

DP: We respect the UN's position because we are also a member. But there are different practices in the world. Countries like China and Saudi Arabia are also accused of human rights violations but they deny it. We must try to understand these

issues in relation to the country in question.

Mr Bandi, people say that the representatives of organisations like UNHCR are bias and are provided inaccurate information by their Nepali counterparts.

GB: I don't know where these accusations come from, but yesterday's press statement came from the official high commissioner of the UNHCR, which reserves the right to comment on such matters because it cannot extend help to processes that are against previously agreed standards.

What do you say about some parties' concern that reopening old wounds will derail the peace process?

GB: We are not opening old wounds. We all know what happened in Argentina in the 1980s and how the peace process there was derailed. Kidnapping people from their bedrooms and killing them on altars after accusing them of being feudalists or executing people in barracks and saying they were killed in combat cannot be called old wounds.

Why did you not consult with lawyers, human rights activists, or civil society while drafting the TRC ordinance and why was it ratified while everyone was asleep?

DP: We did hold discussions with everyone and we are open to dialogue. Our concern is that if we investigate every single case, we will be trapped in a never-ending human rights circle and won't be able to move ahead.

So does that mean you will prosecute those found guilty in the Madi incident?

DP: We have discussed that issue many times and even gone to Madi for evaluation. Everybody knows that army men were inside the bus. It's not as if we killed everyone because as you can see so many NC and UML cadre are still alive.

Mr Bandi, if you investigate every incident after 1990, everyone from government employees to former prime ministers will have to be punished and no one will be spared?

GB: We are not saying that the entire state security along with high ranking members of the Maoist party must be jailed. We just want those who committed wartime atrocities to be punished. Many years ago Pushpa Kamal Dahal said that the Madi incident was unfortunate. So why can't he hand the guilty to the police and let them carry out investigations instead of protecting them.

Why does your party not show any willingness to bring perpetrators to justice?

DP: During the armed conflict the party always punished members who acted against rules and ethics. What is happening now is that people are trying to bring up old cases after we put an end to violence by signing up for the peace process.

What is the solution then, Mr Bandi?

GB: If we remain silent about a TRC that pardons criminals, many more army and policemen along with political leaders will end up like Kumar Lama in international courts. That will be most unfortunate for Nepal, so we need to come up with a home grown solution that grants no amnesty to criminals.

nepalitimes.com

Listen to the interview

Interview with human rights lawyer Govinda Bandi and chief advisor to former PM Baburam Bhattarai, Devendra Paudel, *BBC Nepali Service*, 23 March

BBBC नेपाली

Why are you still opposing the TRC ordinance?

Govinda Bandi: Because it has provisions to grant amnesty to those who committed grave crimes and human rights abuse during the war. Not only does this betray the Nepali people who demand justice, it doesn't meet international standards.

Why did you include provisions for amnesty when everyone is opposing it?

Devendra Paudel: We are not against punishing criminals, but there are many cases of political nature and classifying them as serious crimes is not relevant to the current discussion.

But Article 23 of the latest ordinance says that the government can recommend names of perpetrators who are 'suitable' for amnesty.

DP: Even though all those who died during war are victims, there are cases in Europe and Nepal too during the politically motivated movements of 1950 and 1960, which have not been treated as crimes against humanity.

What is the use of the TRC then?

DP: We have to look at it like this. All the events that took place from the first day of our revolution to the signing of the CPA in 2006 have to be separated from cases that were motivated by personal ambitions.

Do you agree Mr Bandi?

GB: There is a school of thought that likes to look at armed conflict in that manner, but I don't agree with it because it is wrong. The first draft of the TRC had provisions to punish all crimes. But it was strongly opposed and that's why they removed it. Now the commission can only investigate heinous crimes against unarmed civilians. Also how can you bring political motivation into rape cases? Hundreds of non-militants were kidnapped and killed inside barracks, where is the politics in that?

But Article 23 of the last ordinance says those accused of rape and other cases which can't be forgiven, cannot be pardoned.

GB: Article 23 says that, but Article 25 says those who can't be given amnesty should be handled according to currently prevalent law, meaning the recommendations also have to follow law of the land. In Nepal, torture, forced disappearances, and crimes against humanity are not considered crimes by law books at the moment. So Article 25 renders Article 23(2) completely ineffective. We want the guilty to be punished, while this ordinance makes crimes ambiguous and leaves it to the discretion of the commission.

You said that personal and political cases should be kept separate, but why didn't you include that in this ordinance?

DP: We want the commission to provide justice to the victims of grave crimes, but if, as is being widely debated, all cases from the past are brought to trial we will run around in circles, all progress will be lost, and the peace process will be derailed.

Back from the battlefield

Bhim Tamang, 25 March, onlinekhabar.com

onlinekhabar.com

Rumours about attacks on Nepali migrant workers at Pasir Gudang of Johore Bahru state started to surface on Sunday evening. I tried getting hold of Nepalis there, but many didn't answer their phones and those who did sounded frightened and refused to talk much. All they said was that a large number of Malaysian youth had attacked them and they were hiding in the toilets.

After Chakra Subedi, secretary at the Nepali embassy in Kuala Lumpur arrived the next morning, we found out that two Nepalis had been badly injured in the skirmish and were being treated at Sultan hospital in Johore. At the hospital we met Ram Lal Sahu of Rautahat and Raju Bamrel Bishwakarma of Nuwakot who had deep cuts and broken bones. We also met another Nepali worker being treated at the nearby clinic. The police had arrested 12 Nepalis involved in the fight.

We went to the hostel where the brawl began. The place was heavily guarded by policemen and looked like a battleground with broken windows, television sets, and blood smeared all over. The workers there looked frightened and were still in shock. They said four Malaysians had come to attack them and when they retaliated, the four returned with almost 200 others armed with sharp knives and rods and resumed the attack. The police soon arrived, fired several rounds, and bought the situation under control.

After talking to the police and the men in the hostel, we learnt the clash might have started after some Nepalis teased local girls. There have been incidents in the past when Malaysians and Nepalis have had heated discussions over this issue.

Since this was an organised attack, fear of reprisal is high. Secretary Subedi therefore has requested the company to shift the Nepali workers to another location. He will also request authorities in Johore Bahru to not press charges against the Nepalis because they were caught in a planned attack.

Bhim Tamang is *onlinekhabar's* correspondent in Malaysia.

NEPALI TWEETS

इटिडेनी टिडी
मलेसियामा जे भयो नेपालीको दुर्भाग्य हो, आफु आफुले भिडे, त्यो भन्दा ठुलो गल्ती नेपाली मिडियानले गरे, पुष्टी नै नभएको समाचारलाई सनसनी बनाए । 1

What happened in Malaysia is extremely unfortunate. Nepalis fought among themselves and what's worse the media turned unconfirmed events into sensational news.

Sabdachitra
सरकारलाई रेभिडयान्स मिठो लाग्छ। रेभिडयान्समिच आसु पसिना, रगत, उल्पीडन, र युवाको नाशको गन्ध मिसिएको थाह पाउदापाउदै अझै कति मिठो मानेको ?

The government is fond of remittance. But how long can it continue sucking on the tear, sweat, blood, and dead bodies of young people?

kabita dahal
नेपाल वैदेशिक रोजगारको लागि खुल्ला!! प्रथम चरणमा ४०००० कामदार माग #Headlines2020

Nepal has opened its doors to foreign workers. Demand for 40,000 labourers during the first phase. #Headlines2020

Bhasha Sharma
वैद्य बा ने क्यापटप र क्यामरा युद्ध थाले रे। मतदाना टोलीका सामान भकामक खोस्टेछन् ।

Baidya ba is going to start a laptop and camera war. Possessions of voters' registration teams are being seized one after another.

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #6

Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 14 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result:

1. Do you think there will be an election for the parliament after this government is replaced?

Yes **60.5%**
No **18.9%**
Don't know **18.4%**
Won't say **2.1%**

2. When do you think general elections will be held?

By April 2014 **35.7%**
In June 2013 **33.9%**
Don't know **15.9%**
In July 2013 **14.5%**



Dahal: Now you can appoint him, all hurdles have been cleared.
Book: Interim Constitution
Coat: Corrupt

कान्तिपुर Batsayan, *Kantipur*, 24 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“There is no question of holding polls before we finish necessary preparation.”

Madhav Poudel, government's spokesperson, *Naya Patrika*, 28 March

Where next?

Why should we unite the plains in a single Madhesi province, but chop up the hills into little pieces?



GUEST COLUMN
Ushakala Rai

The new constitution is not yet ready and the old constitution is not yet dead. But the 2006 Interim Constitution is being ruthlessly amended by using the obstacle removal provisions in Clause 158.

The way it is being invoked to bulldoze through all barriers on the path to elections reminds one of the way Kathmandu's streets are being widened. Nothing is allowed to stand in the way of this tearing juggernaut as it crashes up a dead-end street. If Khil Raj Regmi can't hold elections on time, he will have to hand power back to the old government with what remains of a comatose constitution.

We have abandoned a sovereign democratic path to elections and taken an undemocratic one. From among the 118 parties, we couldn't agree on one leader to take up to elections. Instead, the

four main parties put the chief justice in charge, who formed a government of ex-bureaucrats. The political leadership of this country certified itself incompetent.

But this doesn't mean the parties are completely out of the picture. They are still pulling strings through the four-party committee. Ex-secretaries who wanted ministerial positions were seen to be lobbying door-to-door and the cabinet is made up of ex-bureaucrats nominated by the Big Four in the same old give-and-take that got us into this mess.

The authoritarian streak of the UCPN(M) has put us here. Every one of the slogans they raised during their so-called 'revolution', has by now proven to be fake. Their demands during negotiations since 2006 were all a hollow charade, excuses to take them closer to the goal of total state capture.

The party fooled progressive Nepalis and self-admittedly hoodwinked the international community with its rhetoric of liberation, equality, and an end to discrimination. Using violence, threats, intimidation,



BIKRAM RAI

and extortion the Maoists ruled with lies and hypnotised all stakeholders into believing a cause that they abandoned long ago. Their slogans about uplifting women, Dalits, and Janajatis were empty slogans.

Now, they are talking about a united electoral front with the Janajati and Madhesi parties. This is another trick. The Madhesi demand for a single Madhes province and the Janajati's one-ethnicity province together represent the greatest threat to the Nepali nation state and to our nationalism. Why are Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai so desperate to back such a proposal?

Cheap populism seems irresistible to both leaders. But in doing so they will destroy what is left of our sovereignty, integrity, and national unity. Otherwise why

would they so single-mindedly devote themselves to an agenda which can bring nothing but fragmentation? Why else would they back a proposal to unite the plains under a single Madhesi province, but chop up the hills into little pieces?

Nepal is a multi-ethnic state, but Dahal insists on single-identity provinces. Why? The answers are clear: the Maoists want a united electoral alliance with ethnic and regional parties for votes so that they can divide and rule the country.

Most Nepalis have seen through the Maoist strategy and know that this will lead to national disintegration. They don't want to be divided by caste, ethnicity, or territoriality. They want to be united because only that will guarantee our dignity and pride as Nepalis.

It is necessary to ensure rights to all excluded

Nepalis: women, the poor, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, the minorities, and the marginalised, but not at the cost of the breakup of Nepal. The excluded must be given a voice, they need to be brought into the political, economic, and cultural mainstream, mostly so that they can have equal opportunities as the rest. And until they can catch up, they need affirmative action in political representation, education, health, and employment.

Single identity-based provinces in a future federation are not going to warrant that, in fact they will guarantee the dismantling of the Nepali nation state.

Our goal is prosperity, equality, and justice. Only that will ensure future peace and the road to those goals lies in multi-ethnic, cross-territorial provinces integrating the Madhes and Pahad and their natural resources within federal provinces.

The reason it is important to think about these issues is because we are now supposedly headed to new elections for a new Constituent Assembly. Let's not make the same mistakes as last time, let's put Nepal's national unity and integrity above all else. Once we ensure that, all other rights will fall into place. 🇳🇵

Ushakala Rai is a former UML CA member from Khotang. The original Nepali version of this op-ed appeared in Kantipur, 26 March. raiushakala@hotmail.com

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Hit the head on the nail

OK, that's enough. Khil Raj Sir, back to work. No more ribbon-cutting and inspecting industrial fairs, let's get this show on the road. In fact, the Interim Chairman of the Interim Council under the Interim Constitution of this Interim Republic should instruct his Interim Cabinet to observe a strict moratorium on officiating, wearing billas, and asan grahans until the interim election is completed. And the only garland the ex's are allowed to wear will be on the day that the polls are completed.



The guys in town who are happiest at the prospect of early elections are the Police. The Tata pickups they got from India in 2008 have been run to the ground because there was no budget for maintenance. But not to worry, Delhi has come to the rescue and promised 400 more pickups for the coming elections. The cops can't wait to get their hands on the new machines.



The Europeans have also opened out their wallets and asked the Cabinet to come up with suggestions to fund election-related paraphernalia. If elections are to be held in June, the Election Commission's wish-list would be:

- Umbrellas, millions of them
- Gumboots for voters
- Lifevests for Tarai booths
- Motorboats, hovercrafts
- Amphibious jeeps
- Leech repellents for booths up to 3,000m
- Snorkelling equipment
- Water-tight ballot boxes

Republic of Nepal. If it wasn't for the cartels that fix prices for transportation, gas dealerships, petrol stations, banks, this country would grind to a halt. Even the politics is run by a syndicate of the Sri 4 Ko Sarkar who won't let anyone else sit at the captain's table.



I'm sure it wasn't deliberate, but the Interim Govt by virtue of the fact that it is made up of nominated ex-bureaucrats has inadvertently controlled corruption, nepotism, and

- Swimsuits for election officials

Time we renamed this country again to move with the times. Henceforth we will be known as the Syndicated Democratic Federal

Marxism. The number of people trying to get in through the gates of Singha Darbar to ask favours, give favours, or just chew the fat has gone down from 1,000 a day in the Baburam Grovelment to 200 a day after Khil Raj took over. Now that prospective muntris don't have to fork out corodes for pre-paid ministerships, there is no reason for them to recoup that moolah from kickbacks while in office.



Throughout the ages, Nepalis have been best known for our propensity to hit the head on the nail. Other countries export horsepower, we export manpower. Nepalis have been walking out on their country in droves even before records started being kept. Greater Nepal now stretches from Malaysia to Lebanon and wherever we go we seem to take our culture of tod-fod, mar-kat, hat-pat, coot-a-coot with us as we saw in Johore Bahru this week. Really living up to our

reputation for being a martial race.



Never a people content with resting on our laurels, we are now also excelling in germ warfare by taking our diseases to the far corners of the world. Our national disease, gastroenteritis, is also called cholera in other parts of the world. And since we are immune to stomach upsets, Nepal's UN Peacekeepers have become global experts in biological warfare and can challenge the world's only remaining superpower. Nepal's most recent germ attack was on the United States with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. All was going swimmingly, but unfortunately the XDR mole got caught in Texas after crossing over illegally into the US and has now been quarantined. But not to worry, we are all walking arsenals of all kinds of lethal communicable diseases. Like foot-in-mouth, which in Nepal also afflicts humans.



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