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THE ELECTION MIRAGE

Nepal's political leaders should take some time off to study the findings from recent polls. Although disillusionment and apathy run high, the people haven't yet given up on them. But they don't want any more empty promises and slogans. Increasing number of Nepalis think federalism may not be so bad, but a majority doesn't want provinces to be named after ethnicities. They will vote for the party that think is best placed to provide them jobs, education, healthcare, and development.

BACK TO THE PEOPLE
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

A FEDERATION OF FACTIONS INSIDE OUT BY MUMA RAM KHANAL

A new fortnightly column by former Maoist central member looks at the Plenum starting Friday that seeks to end the bitter power struggle between Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

PAGE 3



Young Nepali riders are not just bagging prizes in local races, but doing well internationally too. Paraplegics ride hand bicycles along the old trans-Himalayan trade route to raise money for charity.

PAGE 7-9



WATER BABIES: A young boy from Tikathali, Lalitpur swims in the Godavari river to beat the humidity on Wednesday.

BIKRAM RAI

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BACK TO THE PEOPLE

We have often written in this space about the widespread public sense of disappointment with leaders who have repeatedly squandered opportunities to come up with political compromises necessary to extricate the country from the morass they got us into. And now, a party-less government that itself is in life support, seems to be having private doubts about November polls.

But contrary to what we wrote last week, there seems to be a stirring of interest among Nepalis about elections. It must be a desperate attempt to cling to straws that the proportion of people not interested in voting has gone down in the weekly Himalmedia Bazar Poll (See Page 18). The tracking poll carried out every week in 12 urban centres around the country and supported by The Asia Foundation, shows that only 22 per cent of the 363 respondents last week were in the Don't Know/Won't Say category, compared to more than 26 per cent a month ago.

Asked who among the current crop of top leaders they trust the most, Sushil Koirala of the NC has increased his lead to 13.5 per cent, compared to 12.7. UCPN (M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has also climbed one point to 8.8 per cent to put him on second spot. Baburam Bhattarai, on the other hand, has dropped from 9.1 per cent to 8.3 per cent in the past month. The pro-monarchist Kamal Thapa of the RPP-N has nearly doubled his rating from 3.6 percent to 6.6 per cent. But the other leaders, including most Madhesi ones, are all below 2.5 per cent.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

The good news from public opinion polls is that Nepalis haven't given up on the parties, but they will not vote for crooks and liars from the past

Interestingly, the acceptance of federalism among urban respondents appears to be going up steadily in the past four months from 46 per cent to 56 per cent. Those

in favour of ethnicity-based federalism is still low (17 per cent) with more than half supporting North-South federal units.

The responses seem to corroborate the findings of The Citizen Survey 2013 carried out nationwide in April-May by International IDEA as well as the results of the Himalmedia Nationwide Public Opinion Poll 2013.

The IDEA Citizen Survey showed that 69 per cent of Nepalis said they hadn't yet made up their minds about who they would vote for. Half the respondents were confused or did not understand concepts like federalism, but among those who did, support for it has risen to 73 per cent with a majority wanting as few provinces as possible. Interestingly, nearly 7 out of every 10 respondents said they will vote along party lines and not along ethnic or communal ones, and more (45 per cent) said they would vote for women candidates.

Nepal's political leaders should look at these poll findings and take lessons.

The people haven't yet given up on them, although disillusionment is high. They do not want slogans and extraneous issues to cloud the elections. They think federalism is ok, but not by demarcating provinces along ethnic lines.

The political parties would do well to re-invent themselves, have more women candidates, and not field the crooks and liars of the past. The people don't want any more promises, they don't want speeches. They will vote for the party that they think is best placed to provide them jobs, education, healthcare, and development.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

WAR BECOMES A MEMORY

It's interesting to see how differently the three former combatants react to questions about the conflict ('When war becomes a memory', Amir Joshi, #664). One is still stuck in his revolutionary past, the other regrets his past, and the third one (now in the army) wants to forget his past and start fresh. These three men represent Nepal in a microcosm. Now the question is how do we bring these diverse values and philosophies together and move ahead from our bloody past?



JB

leaders did follow communist ideology of wanting to bring equality. But their selfishness and greed took over and the result is clear for everyone to see. Now the insurgency has turned into a bitter memory for the thousands who fought and sacrificed their lives on the frontline as well as those who were killed, wounded, widowed, and orphaned in the name of revolution.

Tashi Lama

We are probably the only country in the world where armies of former enemies were peacefully integrated and this is a fact all Nepalis should be proud of. However, seven years after the peace process Nepal's future is as uncertain as ever and it's not surprising that those who fought the war as well as ordinary citizens are growing increasingly disillusioned with the 'revolutionary' leaders who had promised so much.

Nistha P

It's sad that people like Jaya Bahadur Nyasur (pic, above), who fought for a cause they believed in, are just going to remain as statistics in history. I hope the war has at least taught us Nepalis not to blindly trust leaders who make grand promises but fail to provide even the most basic necessities.

Ramesh P

In the beginning, the Maoist

that have not healed', #664). Thousands of rape and violence cases have not even been reported, so we can only imagine what the actual numbers are like. The state, politicians, and human rights NGOs should have made justice for women a non-negotiable issue during the peace process, but they failed collectively. Even the discourse on justice for victims of war often leaves out this section of the population.

Meera R

Women are and will continue to be the worst victims of armed violence across the world and usually they are also the last ones to receive justice. When (and if) we ever set up a truth and reconciliation commission, women like Purna Maya need to be a priority. Let's not squander the commission in declaring more 'martyrs'.

Renu Shrestha

ELECTION SOLUTION

How many more years is Nepal going to waste declaring election dates and discussing possibilities, only to have it postponed at the last hour ('The election solution', Editorial, #664)? Is this not getting too tiring? Sometimes I fail to understand why and how Nepalis still tolerate all this nonsense.

Julia

It is pretty clear by now that our leaders haven't learnt any lessons from the first CA elections and are set to repeat old mistakes. The number of seats is not a big deal, what is more important is how to resolve disagreements over state restructuring, federalism, and system of governance.

There are vast ideological differences between political parties and leaders and they are all undecided about the blueprint that will take Nepal ahead. I think the most sensible option now is to draw up five provinces, ask experts to write the constitution, and then promulgate it through the CA.

Phurpa Tamang

BREAKING UP AND MAKING UP

There is no such thing as consensual politics, it has been invented to deceive the Nepali public ('Breaking up and making up', Anurag Acharya, #664). Consensual politics is impractical, undemocratic, and unhealthy and the media and politicians alike have milked this word for their benefit for far too long. How can 30 odd parties with different philosophies come to a consensus in a democratic system? If everyone one had similar views and no one disagreed, it would be like a partyless panchayat system.

B

The last time I arrived, I swear the taxi was the same one I got into in 1983 because it had holes in the floor then.

Teresa Green

TALKING TAMIL

The story about children of Nepali immigrants in Chennai learning Tamil is interesting, but hype notwithstanding, do these children have any other choice ('Talking Tamil', Bhrikuti Rai, #664)?

Armugam

It's good to know that these children are learning Tamil, but wouldn't it be wise for them to 'retain' their Nepali? In

Q OF THE WEEK

What do you like the most about monsoon ?

facebook

Assem Shamsher Rana: The rain
Bhichhyan Rai: Less loadshedding
Dirgha Raj Karki: The word monsoon
Johan De Meyere: The sudden end of it
Sandeep Sharma: Monsoon in Pokhara
Sharad Duwal: The rawness it brings
Sudeep Manandhar: Raincoat
Ashish Sharma: Greenery
Masayo Kiyoto: Inconvenience
Abhusan Nepali: Jamal ma rafting
Andy Collins: Leeches
Prashant Shrestha : Smiling people
Shova Gurung: Everything
Neeta Dongol: Falling asleep

This week's Question:

What do you do to kill time during loadshedding?
Go to www.facebook.com/nepalitimes or www.twitter.com/nepalitimes to respond.

Nepal we talk a lot about promoting mother tongues and trying to preserve languages like Kusunda with just only one speaker and yet we proudly post news about how these children are forgetting Nepali.

Manoj

TAXI

It's good that Tribhuvan International Airport is finally getting new taxis, but I am wondering if anything has been done about the airport toilet/restrooms ('Taxi!', Sunir Pandey, #664)?

Neprikan



A federation of factions



INSIDE OUT

Muma Ram Khanal

Almost everything is on hold until the internal power struggle within the UCPN (M) is sorted out

All eyes should now be on the preparations for the proposed all-party roundtable meeting, but the media focus is on the UCPN (M) Plenum which has been called on Friday to resolve a ridiculous ideological and political dispute within the party.

Lenin used to say that the organisation of a communist party is the organisation of the hierarchy of its leaders. There is a pecking order of committees under a chairman and all leftists, ultra-leftists, reformists, even revisionists around the world operate under this Leninist party structure.

The UCPN (M) is no different. No matter how loudly the party utters the term 'democratic centralism', its methods and manner of mobilising the cadre are individualistic and centralist. An organisation controlled and directed by a single person who is always above everyone else cannot survive for long. The clamour for a share of power and party posts within the UCPN (M) represents a reaction to the position-mongering of its chairman who has been the

helmsman-in-chief for over two decades now.

The UCPN (M) is today a federation of factions. Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is finding it more difficult than during the conflict to maintain a balance among the groupists. In open political milieu of the present, Dahal can't hypnotise his cadre with revolutionary speeches anymore. That is why he has kept postponing the party congress on various pretexts.

The Hetauda Congress in April was held after the party split and at a time of relative ideological conformity, the party started toeing an almost 'parliamentary' line, but it remained under one-man rule. Certainly, the present crisis would not have arisen if the election of the vital posts and members of the central committee had been held in Hetauda.

Quite the opposite, the system of individual designation was put in place on the recommendation of Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai to solve the problem of exclusion of their own loyalists and the leaders of the particular faction from the top echelons of the party.

The other leaders, who have understood the reality of how the influential posts of a party are converted into cash from their seniors, now have started to stake a claim to the principal posts and the demand to distribute party positions has reached a climax.

Bhattarai clearly represents those most dissatisfied with Dahal's hold on power and cult of personality. After the party split, it was impossible for Bhattarai to stay on as vice-chairman on equal footing with Narayan Kaji Shrestha. He wanted to be Number Two

in the hierarchy and has been discussing this with Dahal who has kept ignoring it. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and resigned as vice-chairman last week in typical hypocritical fashion in which he tried to

portray it as a selfless act of sacrifice. Everyone knows Bhattarai wasn't renouncing anything, he just wanted a more senior position.

Bhattarai has been offered the position of 'senior leader',

but internal party dynamics have gotten even more complicated. In the past, Dahal played the balancing role between Bhattarai's 'parliamentary' line and the radical line of Baidya. If both leave the party, however, Dahal will have no option but to unite with Baidya. Which is why the chairman is hell-bent on keeping Bhattarai on board by offering him the 'senior leader' lollipop.

The November elections has given Dahal a further sense of urgency to keep Bhattarai reined in. The two may distrust each other, but they need each other. The extended meeting of the party will be a formality to endorse a pre-mediated secret deal that Dahal and Bhattarai will have to strike. But it will shatter the ambition of other leaders, even though Bhattarai's return to the fold amidst garlands will be hailed as a great achievement.

The crisis within the UCPN (M) therefore is not really ideological, but rather the clash of ambitions between Dahal and Bhattarai. Unless a new system in which all positions and members are elected is introduced, the party's special congress will just be a show in which everything, as usual, has been decided beforehand. 🇳🇵

Muma Ram Khanal was a central leader of the CPN (Maoist) during the insurgency. His new column, Inside Out, will appear every fortnight in Nepali Times.

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KUNDA DIXIT

Move over, MDGs. Here come the SDGs.



Surendra Shrestha served in the United Nations Environment Program’s Rio+20 Secretariat as Team Leader for Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development that is drawing up new sustainable development goals for the 21st century. He explained the goals to *Nepali Times* during a visit to Kathmandu this week.

Nepali Times: Having been involved in negotiations at the United Nations for new Sustainable Development Goals, can you tell our readers what these goals are meant to be and why they are important?
Surendra Shrestha: The SDGs are meant to be a coherent, collective response of 193 member states of the UN to the multiple crises that humanity faces. The goals are important because they are about our children and collective actions for survival and existence on planet Earth.
The world population has grown exponentially since the start of the industrial revolution. We are now 7.3 billion and, in two decades, the population is expected to stabilise at nine billion. Our resource intensive lifestyle is depleting natural resources and environment services faster than nature is able to replenish them.

The intensity and frequency of natural disasters are increasing due to climate change. Inequality is causing civil unrest. Current scientific knowledge compels us to have a more holistic approach to address these crises as countries. The SDGs are a part of discussions at the United Nations General Assembly for the post-2015 Development Agenda that will set the direction for the rest of the 21st century.

So, the SDGs have been influenced by the success of the Millennium Development Goals?
The MDGs have brought the international community together around eight mainly social goals for developing countries. These targetted the ‘bottom billion’ and provided direction and focus for the donor community. MDGs that expire in 2015 have shown that collective

GOALS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Millennium Development Goals 2015	Proposed SDG Focus Areas
1 End poverty and hunger	1 Green jobs, youth employment, and social inclusion
2 Achieve universal primary education	2 Energy access, efficiency, sustainability
3 Promote gender equality and empower women	3 Food security and sustainable agriculture
4 Reduce child mortality	4 Water
5 Improve maternal health	5 Sustainable cities
6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	6 Management of the oceans, fisheries, and other marine resources
7 Ensure environmental sustainability	7 Improved resilience and disaster preparedness
8 Develop a global partnership for development	

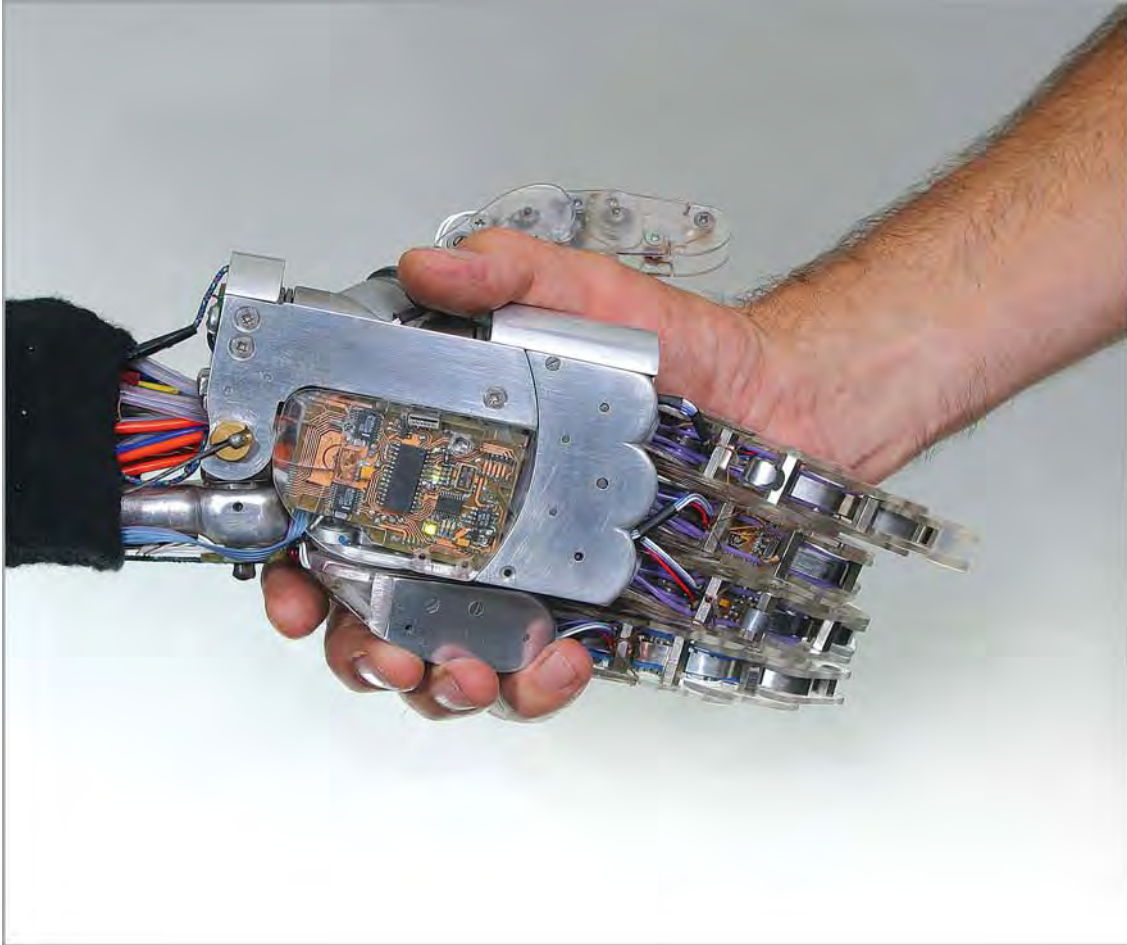
action is possible when there is agreement at the global level and have had an impact on the current discussions for SDGs and post-2015 Development Agenda in both the process and content. Through a more inclusive process, 70 UN member states are discussing and negotiating the SDGs and they have also recognised the need for sustainable development with equal treatment of all three dimensions -economic, social, and environmental- in the implementation. The SDGs will be for all countries, not just for developing ones, and will work on priorities that now need to be clustered into a few goals that build on the MDGs.

Aren’t century-long targets too long? How are we ever going to make sure the targets are met?
The discussions at the UN on SDGs are ongoing and is hoped to be completed by September 2015. The goals will be an action plan for the next 15 years with immediate and urgent actions to achieving long-term goals. At the global level, SDGs will be aspirational and universal, and a participatory approach will help countries define national targets to meet these goals. The metrics will be important and common indicators will ensure the measurement will be a part of national statistical bureaus.

Are there going to be resources for poorer countries to meet the basic needs targets?
An expert working group on finance from over 30 countries will begin deliberations on finance for sustainable development. Given the current financial landscape, the discussions will include ODA, technology support as well as issues such as trade. The BRICS countries are expected to play a bigger role in both the governance and contribution of the financial architecture for the 21st century.

Nepal has made dramatic progress in attaining almost all of the MDGs. What are our prospects vis-a-vis SDGs?
Nepal is a member of the Open Working Group on SDGs and will be a signatory to the SDGs when it is completed in 2015. The Planning Commission will need to embrace the SDGs in its planning process and, as a country in the less developed category, Nepal will receive external assistance to achieve the SDGs like the MDGs with political support.

Personally, what was the most challenging part of the negotiations?
In the Secretariat it was to communicate to the negotiators the complex technical issues in a simple easy to understand briefs and to understand the group dynamics to reach a consensus on a given topic and their interconnectedness to other topics.



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Weapons of mass economic destruction

HAROLD JAMES IN PRINCETON

As we approach the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, the lessons of 1914 are about more than simply the dangers of national animosities. The origins of the Great War include a fascinating precedent concerning how financial globalisation can become the equivalent of a national arms race, thereby increasing the vulnerability of the international order.

In 1907, a major financial crisis emanating from the United States affected the rest of the world and demonstrated the fragility of the entire international financial system. The response to the current financial crisis is replaying a similar dynamic. The aftermath of the 1907 crash drove the hegemonic power of the time – Great Britain – to reflect on how it could use its financial clout to enhance its overall strategic capacity.

Between 1905 and 1908, the British Admiralty developed the broad outlines of a plan for financial and economic warfare against Europe's rising power, Germany. Economic warfare, if implemented in full, would wreck Germany's financial system and force it out of any military conflict. When Britain's naval visionaries confronted a rival in the form of the Kaiser's Germany, they understood how power could thrive on financial fragility.

Pre-1914 Britain anticipated the private-public partnership that today links technology giants such as Google, Apple, or Verizon to US intelligence agencies. London banks

underwrote most of the world's trade; Lloyds provided insurance for the world's shipping. These financial networks provided the information that enabled the British government to discover the sensitive strategic vulnerabilities of the opposing alliance.

For Britain's rivals, the financial panic of 1907 demonstrated the necessity of mobilising financial power themselves. The US, for its part, recognised that it needed a central bank analogous to the Bank of England. American financiers were persuaded that New York needed to develop its own commercial trading system to handle bills of exchange in the same way as the London market and arrange



their monetisation (or 'acceptance').

Some of the dynamics of the pre-1914 financial world are now re-emerging. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, financial institutions appear both as dangerous weapons of mass economic destruction, but also as potential instruments for the application of national power.

In managing the 2008 crisis, foreign banks' dependence on US-dollar funding constituted a major weakness and required the provision of large swap lines by the Federal

Reserve. Addressing that flaw requires renationalisation of banking and breaking up the activities of large financial institutions. For European bankers, and some governments, current efforts by the US to revise its approach to the operation of foreign bank subsidiaries within its territory highlight that imperative. They view the US move as a new sort of financial protectionism and are threatening retaliation.

Geopolitics is intruding into banking practice elsewhere as well. Russian banks are trying to acquire assets in Central and Eastern Europe. European banks are playing a much-reduced role in Asian trade finance. Chinese banks are being pushed to expand their role in global commerce. Many countries have begun to look at financial protectionism as a way to increase their political leverage.

The next step in this logic is to think about how financial power can be directed to national advantage in the case of a diplomatic conflict. Sanctions are a routine (and not terribly successful) part of the pressure applied to rogue states like Iran and North Korea. But financial pressure can be much more powerfully applied to countries that are deeply embedded in the global economy.

In 1907, in the wake of an epochal financial crisis that almost brought a complete global collapse, several countries started to think of finance primarily as an instrument of raw power that could and should be turned to national advantage. That kind of thinking brought war in 1914. A century later, in 2007-2008, the world experienced an even greater financial shock and nationalistic passions have flared up in its wake. Destructive strategies may not be far behind.

www.project-syndicate.org

Harold James is Professor of History and International Affairs at Princeton University and Professor of History at the European University Institute, Florence.

BIZ BRIEFS



Talking business

Seven countries participated in the regional conference organised by Qatar Airways in Kathmandu. The two-day event focused on the theme 'Own the Business'.

Winning duos

Sahana Bajracharya and Dawa Steven Sherpa won the EcoSport Amazing Motor rally organised by GO Ford. The winning duo received air tickets to Bangkok while two other teams won several gift hampers.



New face

Captain of the Nepali Cricket Team, Paras Khadka, has been signed as the brand ambassador for Pulsar motorbike. Khadka will endorse the brand for three years and will feature in its promotional campaigns and activities.

S&D

Everest Bank recently entered into an agreement with Nepal Stock Exchange to enlist its debenture. The contract was signed between AK Ahluwalia, CEO of Everest Bank and Sitaram Thapaliya, General Manager of NEPSE on Sunday.



Sporty delight

Agni Incorporated unveiled Mahindra SUV Quanto in Kathmandu. Powered by a 1.5 litre mCR100 diesel engine, Quanto will be available across Nepal at Mahindra dealerships in four variants.

Cash cash

Pepsi announced the fourth week's daily winners of its 20-20 campaign. The winning numbers are 5098791, 983060N, 591538Y, 162895I, 341617F, 729879Q and 887690H. The grand prize winner will take home Rs 2 million at the end of the campaign.



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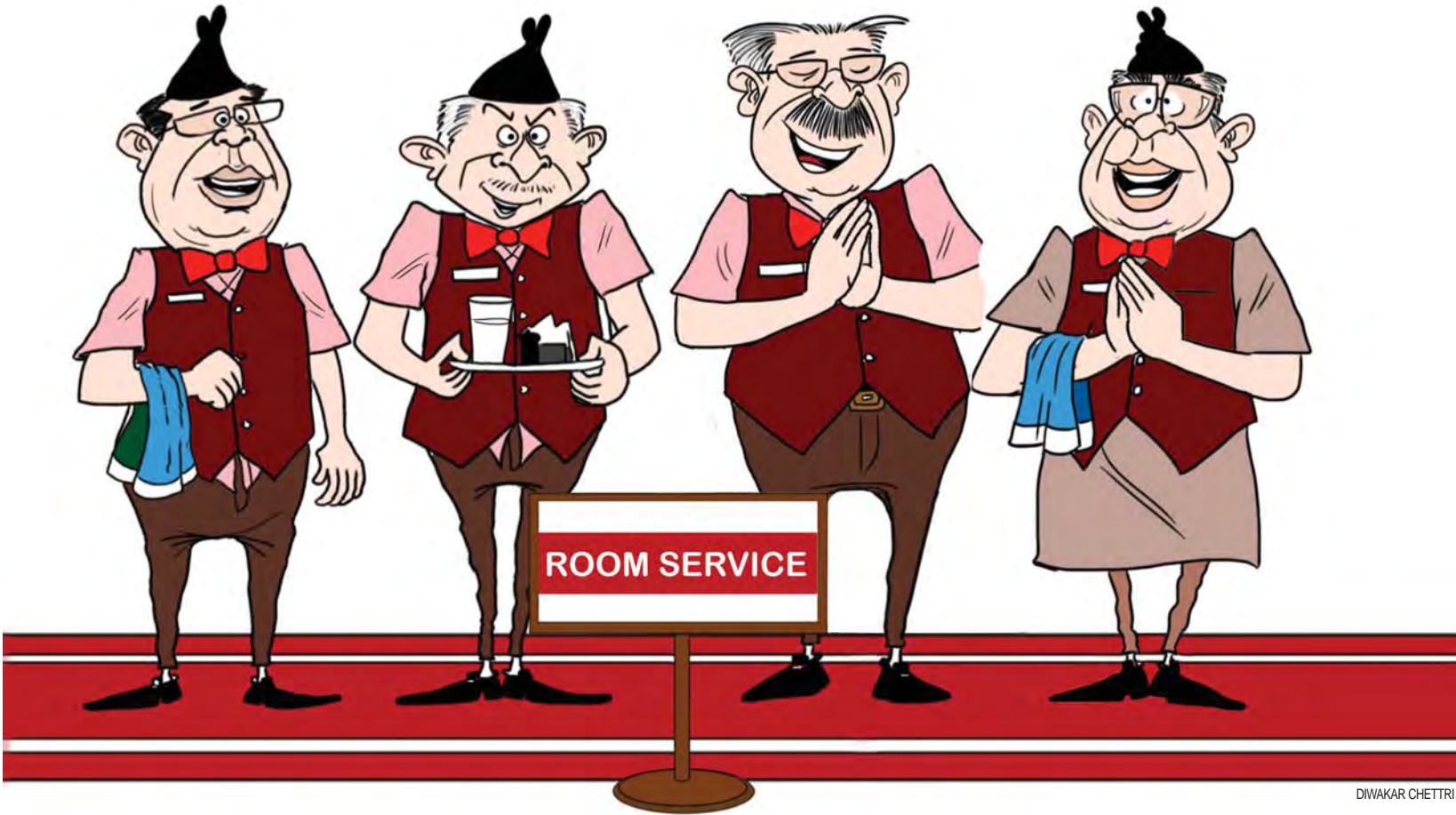
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In the global blind spot

Nepal is in serious need of rebranding and restoring self-esteem



HERE WE GO
Trishna Rana

Protocol violations by former prime ministers, ministers, and leaders as they queued up outside Dwarika’s Hotel last week to meet Indian Minister of External Affairs Salman Khurshid set off a self-righteous nationalistic

uproar in Nepal. Not a single newspaper could resist dashing off an outraged editorial. Many saw it as an affront to Nepal’s sovereignty and national pride. Though such criticism was not unwarranted, this was not the

first time our leaders have chosen to ignore protocol. From Baburam Bhattarai to Pushpa Kamal Dahal, from Madhav Kumar Nepal to GP Koirala, they have all been guilty of hosting or visiting ambassadors and dignitaries without the knowledge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

While a particularly egregious example of our leadership’s lack of political acumen and tact, the queue at Dwarika’s was only the latest proof of Nepal’s sinking image in regional and global politics. What does it say about a country when ex-prime ministers line up to kowtow before a foreign minister and use the occasion to bad mouth fellow Nepalis, weave excuses, grovel and beg, and come up with no coordinated national response to resolve our national crisis? Never in our history, not even when our neighbour to the south was British India, have we stooped so low.

One might argue that Nepal is an important trading and investment partner for its northern and southern neighbours and this may give us an inflated opinion about our own geo-strategic importance. Given our economic crisis and political mismanagement, the only reason our neighbours are interested in us is because Nepal might just blow up.

Our trade deficit with India of Rs 290 billion a year is so heavily lopsided that India doesn’t even see it in its own national interest anymore. Petroleum imports have doubled in three years and because of our lack of foresight in switching to renewable energy, it will continue to grow.

And even as we try to extricate ourselves from the

FAFT’s (Financial Action Task Force) ‘grey’ list and create a more conducive environment for foreign direct investment, unless there is long-term political stability and continuity in economic policy, we will carry on being regarded as the poorest and sickest country in the region.

Trips to China and India have long been a rite of passage for our prime ministers, but it took more than a decade after Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji’s tour in May 2001 for the next premier to step on Nepali soil. Cancelled at the last minute and rescheduled, when Wen Jiabao finally made it to Kathmandu in January 2012, the visit lasted for just five hours. Nepal was just on the way from somewhere to somewhere.

India’s record is even more abysmal, with the last prime ministerial visit taking place 16 years ago. Compare this to Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Afghanistan which have been hosting successive Indian and Chinese prime ministers and presidents – almost one major visit a year. For three years now, Nepal has also had no ambassador in the country that is politically and economically the most important to us.

Outside of South Asia, too, Nepal seems to have lost what little clout it had. Barring the occasional trips by heads of aid agencies and experts, high profile visitors just don’t bother anymore. It is as though Europe and the United States have outsourced their Nepal policy to New Delhi and so a Kathmandu pit-stop is no longer deemed necessary.

Although bilateral relationships hinge on more than glossy photo-ops, these visits have symbolic value. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a two-day pit visit to Dhaka during her Asia trip last year before heading to India. While confirming the value the Obama administration placed on economic ties with Bangladesh, the trip also marked the US’s endorsement of Bangladesh as a role model for other developing countries where trade now supersedes aid.

It’s not surprising, then, that except for major events like Everest anniversaries and plane crashes, Nepal falls in the international media’s blind spot. The scant coverage it gets is usually heavily influenced by Indian views, with the nation pegged somewhere between a failing and a failed state.

Nepal is in serious need of rebranding and restoring its self-esteem. The place to start is to stop blaming others and each other. Nepali leaders need to first deliver on promises to their own people and get our politics right.



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Crisscrossing the

TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

1981: Four Indian Army men - captains HC Kohli (team leader), H Chauhan, Nima Dorji Sherpa, Nar Bahadur Gurung- set out to traverse the entire Himalayan range alpine style. If they succeed, they will be the first to complete the trans-Himalayan expedition, setting a new record.

1982: After 485 days of hiking through leech infested jungles in Arunachal Pradesh of north east India, trudging through vast stretches of snow, climbing three peaks, crisscrossing 48 passes and glaciers, and experiencing the mountain life of three countries- India, Bhutan, Nepal- the men complete their mission by unfurling the Indian flag at 6,110m in Karakoram Pass, Ladakh. At a press conference in Delhi, the team introduces their fifth member Druk, a Tibetan mastiff found in Bhumthang valley of Bhutan who accompanied the soldiers as they completed the 8,000km journey. Druk seems unfazed by all the attention.

More than 30 years since the team completed its phenomenal 1981 expedition, we meet Nar Bahadur Gurung (*pic, far right*)



in Kathmandu. Born in Pokhara, Gurung joined the Indian Army in the 1970s. After retirement in 2000, the 66-year-old father of four spent a few months in Darjeeling before heading home to start a trekking agency with a friend.

Gurung's face lights up as he sets out a collage of photos, scraps of old newspaper clippings, and route maps in front of us and begins to reminisce about the journey that made history and inspired a generation. "Ours was one of the most difficult

expeditions of all time," he says. Sponsored by the Indian Army Adventure Foundation, the expedition was the brain-child of its director, Lt Col SS Singh, who worked closely with the four men in outlining possible routes and also supervising the training



session. Says Gurung: "Some of my fondest memories in the army are from the time I spent at the mountaineering and skiing institute in Kashmir. And the day I found out I had been chosen for the expedition, I was the happiest man alive."

The team set out on 15 January 1981 from Gelling at the Indo-Tibet border in Arunachal Pradesh. From there on they marched to Bomdila, before crossing into Paro and Thimpu in Bhutan, Gangtok in Sikkim, and entering Nepal via the Kanchenjunga range. In the Nepal circuit of the expedition, the team passed through Makalu Base Camp,



continent

Determination, team spirit, and love for adventure took four soldiers on a never-before attempted journey through the Himalayas



MISSION POSSIBLE (l-r): General Srinivas Kumar Sinha greets HC Kohli (not seen) H Chauhan, ND Sherpa, and NB Gurung at a reception in Shimla in May 1982. The team at the Everest Base Camp in June 1981. Druk is seen here with the team in a newspaper clipping from May 1982.

Sherpini Col, Baruntse Glacier, West Col, and Amphulaptsa Pass to Everest Base Camp, before coming down to Namche Bajar, and heading up to Tashi-Laptsa Pass to Rolwaling Himal and finally ending their 15 months long journey in Ladakh.

We ask the ex-army man what was most challenging during the journey? "The snow," he replies instantly. It was snow that almost claimed their lives, twice. The first time an avalanche caught the team off guard in the Everest region and the second time, it swept two of them in Spiti valley in Himachal Pradesh where the team was skiing. Luckily, except for the loss of equipment and Kohli's camera, there were no other casualties. Surviving on dehydrated

vegetables and food, Gurung playfully admits, was another big challenge.

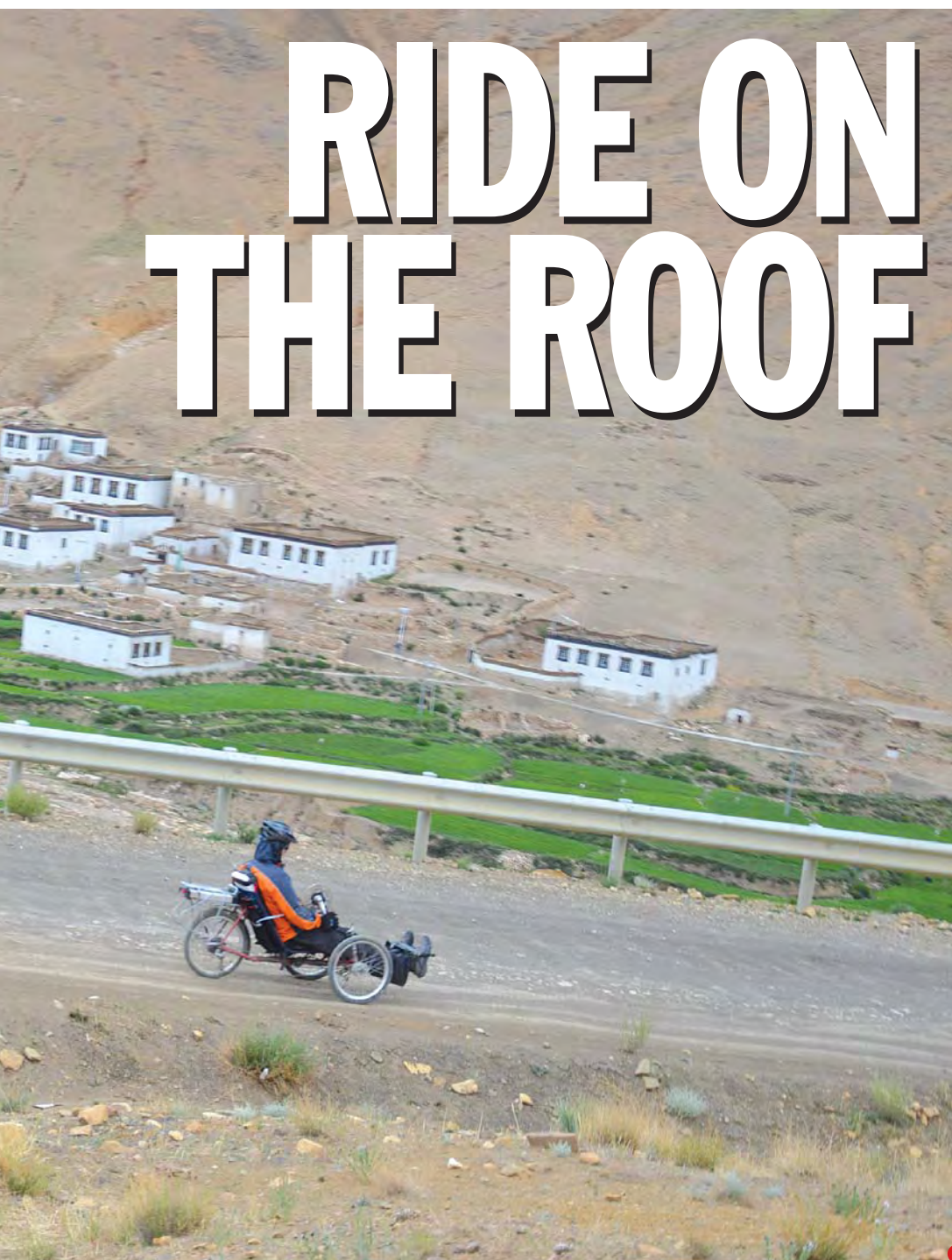
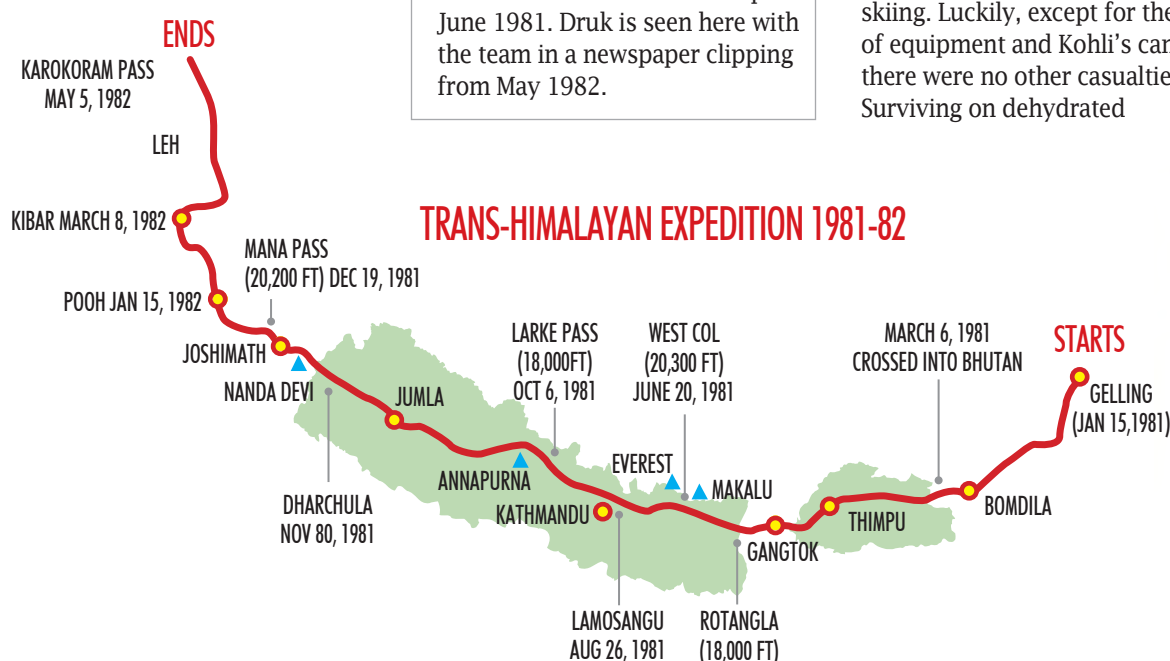
Wasn't it tough living in rugged terrain, temperature extremes, and rooming in a single tent with

three other men? "All of us had immense determination. No matter how tough things got, we always stayed focused on our goals and that is why we were successful," he explains.

Of the remaining members, ND Sherpa passed away in the late nineties, Kohli like Gurung runs a trekking agency in the UK, and Chauhan is serving as the president of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

After the success of the Indian Army's expedition, others followed. That same year, Peter Hillary and his team set out to trek from Kanchenjunga to K2 in Pakistan, followed by Arlene Blum and Hugh Swift in 1982 who walked from Bhutan to Ladakh. A British women's team also walked the route in 1983 starting from Sikkim, and in 1991, Australian Sorrel Wilby and her husband Chris Ciantar completed the 6,500 km journey from the Indus Valley in Pakistan to Arunachal Pradesh.

Given a chance would Gurung like to do this all over again? "Absolutely," he replies without hesitating.



Before Catriona Williams had a riding accident that led to a spinal cord injury that paralysed her, she never gave much thought to cycling. But earlier this month she returned from a grueling two-week ride across the Himalaya from Lhasa to Kathmandu via Mt Everest Base Camp.

Her team of 15 cyclists, among whom were three tetraplegics including herself, rode their hand cycles along the old trans-Himalayan trading route in a campaign to raise \$1 million to help find a cure for spinal cord injury.

Williams was New Zealand's champion equestrian and had represented her country in competitions all over the world. In 2002 she fell off a horse at a championship and suffered from injuries to her spinal cord and needed a wheelchair to move. Not one to be confined, she started The Catwalk Spinal Injury Trust to raise awareness about spinal cord injury.

The goal this time was to make cycling as difficult as possible by riding down from the

roof of the world. None of the participants had hand-cycled for so long at one go and certainly not at such high altitude through rough roads. Before Williams and her team went to Lhasa, doctors had recommended seeking an easier challenge, but they persevered and even returned a day earlier than scheduled.

"Surprisingly, it was tougher on our able-bodied cyclists than it was for us," says Williams. "The 100km from the turnoff to Everest Base Camp through Rongbuk was all rough road and was harder for us."

The team also included tetraplegics fellow-New Zealanders Neil Cudby and Rob Creagh and when they finally got to the Everest Base Camp one of their bikes broke down, so the remaining two towed him to the destination. It was a world-first for tetraplegics to have done the Lhasa-Kathmandu ride. Williams says the feeling of having overcome this momentous task has still not sunk in.

"It was a personal goal for the three of us, to see how far our bodies would go," says Williams. "But the main aim was to raise awareness and money, so that kids who break their necks get help. Even if there is no time for us to fully recover and be able to walk and dance again, we want to make a difference for the next generation."

The team raised \$600,000 and Williams hopes this will help fund spinal cord injury. Says Williams: "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

Sunir Pandey

www.catwalk.org.nz

nepalitimes.com

Pedal Power, #659
Watch interview of Catriona Williams

- 1 WHEEL POWER (l-r):** Neil Cudby, Catriona Williams, and Rob Creagh at Everest Base Camp at 5,200 metres.
- 2** Check point to enter Everest Base Camp.
- 3** Heading down to Pangla from Rongbuk valley.
- 4** Everest appears briefly through the clouds from the campsite next to Rongbuk monastery.

EVENTS



MCUBE CHAKATI GUFF, talk and presentation by visual artist Ashmina Ranjit. 19 July, 4 to 6 pm, Gallery Mcube, Chakupat, Lalitpur

Monsoon Yoga @ Monastery, engage in classic Ashtanga yoga, walk to a famous meditation cave nearby, and learn about Buddhism from the of Neydo Monastery. Rs 9750, 20 to 21 July, 8am to 7pm, Neydo Monastery, Pharping, Pranayama Yoga

Parda, watch the Nepali adaptation of Tennessee Williams' classic *A Street Car Named Desire* by the Freelancers Nepal. 19 July, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar

Critical Mass, be a part of a cycling movement that is taking place in 300 cities around the world and pedal around town on the last Friday of every month. 26 July, 5.30 to 7.30pm, Tudhikhel

Goalmari, Bangladesh's Own Island, a photo exhibition by Bangladeshi

photographer Munem Wasif that revolves around water problems faced by his country. 25 July to 15 August, 10am to 6pm, Alliance Francaise of Kathmandu, Teku road, (01)4241163/4242832

Bottoms up, let your taste buds and olfactory nerves go on a joy ride at the 10th Annual wine tasting festival at Kilroys. Rs 200 per glass or Rs 800 per half litre. July to August, Kilroy's, Thamel, (01)4250440/41

Goal, team up with friends and take on other teams in the KTM Nights Cup futsal tournament. Rs 8000 per team, 27 to 28 July, 8 am to 8pm, Grassroots Recreational Centre, Mandikatar, 9841342635



NEVER SORRY, the inside story of Ai Wei Wei, who inspired global audiences and blurred the boundaries of art and politics. 19 July, 5.30pm, Sattya Media Arts, Jhamsikhel (01)5523486

A People War, a permanent exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through

10 years of insurgency. Everyday except Tuesday, 11 am to 4 pm, (01)5549948, www.madanpuraskar.org

Cut! write a script, win \$2700 prize money, and make your own movie. Deadline 15 August, www.newnepalcinema.com/script2013

Together for Baitadi, ride to raise money to build an eco-friendly birthing facility in Baitadi. 20 July, register at www.socialtours.blogspot

Voices, a talk program with media personalities Kunda Dixit and Narayan Wagle. 19 July, 4 pm, Nepal Bharat Library, Nepal Airlines Building, New Road

Report it, hone your report writing skills with at this three day workshop. Rs 6000, 26 to 28 July, 9.30am to 4.30pm, CareerMaster Nepal and HR Development Center, Pulchok, Lalitpur, (01)5524891

Photography Workshop, learn the tricks of basic photography with in-class lectures and practical shooting assignments. Rs 4000, 21 July to 14 August, Sundays and Wednesdays, 5 to 7pm, photo.circle HQ, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, learning@photocircle.com.np.

Talk Talk, meet and share your ideas with Jon Shrestha, the 19-year-old author of crime fiction novel *The Darkside*. 22 July, 4.30 to 6 pm, Pasa Yard, Lalitpur

Spak and Friends, don't miss an evening of music, dance, and stand-up comedy. 19 July, 7.45pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

DINING



TASS AND TAWA, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. Pulchok, Kathmandu

Eel Festival @ Mako's, enjoy a four-course combination of Japanese delicacies and don't miss out on the house specialty green tea ice-cream. Rs 2000, 15 to 22 July, Mako's Japanese Restaurant, The Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali, (01) 4479488



D LICES DE FRANCE, taste a piece of France in the heart of Kathmandu. Thamel

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Caf , bide your time in the free wi-fi zone as you enjoy wood fired pizzas, home-made pastas and Tibetan gyakok, Boudha, 9841484408

Cafe Cheeno, comfortable and elegant, Cafe Cheeno is the perfect place to have a cup of coffee and chat with friends. Patan Dhoka

Dhokaima Cafe, exquisite ambience, friendly service, cosy bar, place to see and be seen at. Patan Dhoka, Yala Maya Kendra, 5522113

Degaa Resto Lounge, for mouth watering Newari and Indian cuisine. Kumaripati, (01)5008679

Peri Peri, home of legendary Portugese flamed grilled chicken, enjoy dishes served with the trademark piri piri sauce. Jhamsikhel, 9808563803



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

Yellow Chilli, enjoy renowned Indian chef Sanjeev Kapoor's signature Indian delicacies and a variety of other mouthwatering dishes. Thapathali



ALICE RESTAURANT, step in for scrumptious Thakali, Chinese, Continental, and Japanese cuisine. Gairidhara, (01)4429207



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MUSIC



MONKEY TEMPLE LIVE, the band will perform its new single *Sanga* and covers of Incubus and Wolfmother among others. 19 July, Casa De Cass, Pulchowk



REGGAE EXPLOZION, share the reggae vibes in an evening with Joint Family Internationale. 19 July, 7.45pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel

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



MUSIC JAMS, enjoy great live music every Tuesday. 7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

GETAWAYS

Hotel Landmark, made entirely from traditional Nepali brick and woodcraft, this hotel is rich not only in heritage, but also in services and boasts an award winning restaurant, the Hungry Eye. Pokhara, (061)462908/3096/48 97, www.landmarkpokhara.com



TEMPLE TREE RESORT AND SPA, a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna- it also hosts three different restaurants to cater to your needs. Gaurighat, Lakeside, 977-61-465819

Dhulikhel Mountain Resort, announces summer bonanza offer. Make the resort your home for a price you just can't beat. Dhulikhel, (011)490114/494

Park Village Hotel, enjoy relaxing yoga, detox and Ayurveda treatments, and retreats under one roof and get 10 per cent off on all Ayurvedic treatments. Budhanilkantha, 98010 66 661, www.himalayanwellness.com.np



KORA

The third edition of the Kathmandu Kora Cycling Challenge will take place on Saturday. More than 700 cyclists have registered to take part in the challenge that aims to raise 1 million rupees to build a model eco- friendly birthing centre in Baitadi.

The Kora is a circuit route of the Kathmandu valley's lower hills, sub urban areas and sights. Participants can choose to take on the 50 km challenge or the more demanding 75 km. For each kilometer covered, the Kathmandu Kora requests participants to pledge Rs 100 for support.

If you are not a cyclist, you can help by choosing to sponsor a few kilometers or others cyclists taking on the challenge. Last year's challenge saw participation of 300 riders and collectively raised over Rs 950,000 which went towards building a birthing facility at Samritu in Rukum.

Date: 20 July 2013
Time: 7am
Place: Patan Durbar Square
www.kathmandukora.net

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Kutumba live for children

Head down to Patan Museum and show your support for Baby Life Home- a home for children infected with HIV/AIDS. Moving forward with the motto 'altruism is religion', Baby Life Home has been providing shelter and education to infected children from Dang, Baitadi, and Salyan Nepali folk instrumental band Kutumba performs live along with Hari Maharjan and Monsif to support the home. Also enjoy Slam poetry by Word Warriors.

Entrance: Rs 300
Date: 19 July
Time: 5pm onwards
Venue: Patan Museum Courtyard



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JIRO DREAMS OF SUSHI





MUST SEE

Sophia Pande

Is your profession your passion? If it isn't shouldn't it be? Well, of course we all know it isn't that easy, after all, how many of us are able to live for our work? To be able to spring out of bed with the proverbial song in our hearts because we are anticipating a day of doing what we love? Most of us work so we can live, but not Jiro Ono, the 85-year-old Michelin starred chef who wakes in the mornings having dreamt about how to perfect his already sublime sushi and heads to his revered but tiny 10 seat restaurant to implement his newest strategy to make that perfect mouthful.

Made in 2011 by David Gelb, what makes *Jiro Dreams*

of *Sushi* fascinating is that in addition to the film being about one man's quest for perfection, it is also a fascinating cultural study disguised as a character study of that one man and his peculiarities. While Jiro may dream of perfect sushi, he is far from perfect himself. Even at 85 he is a powerhouse, focused on his passion, a hard taskmaster, and a demanding father to his two sons, Yoshikazu and Takashi, both of who apprenticed at his restaurant.

Yoshikazu, the eldest, who is 50 but still works under his father is expected to take over the restaurant after Jiro. As hardworking and loyal as he is, Yoshikazu still chafes under his father's autocratic system. After Jiro collapsed at the age of 70 at the seafood market, Yoshikazu has taken over the hallowed task of choosing the day's seafood. This means every morning he wakes up at an unearthly hour to go and

meet their most trusted vendors to get the finest tuna, octopus, salmon roe, and many other such delicate essentials to make their near perfect sushi.

Takashi meanwhile was pushed out of the restaurant after his 10 year long apprenticeship (all apprentices must remain for a minimum of 10 years before they are ever allowed the title of 'chef') by Jiro himself who knew that according to strict Japanese tradition there is only space for the older son to take over the business.

Both sons are clearly very talented and rigorously trained, but it is unclear whether either of them will be able to emerge from behind the shadow of the god-like Jiro who is so revered that when he places a lovingly handcrafted sushi in front of his customers they are often too nervous to eat.

These complex human dynamics, as well as the finding, preparing, and making of the sushi are expertly but unobtrusively filmed by Gelb himself in a crystal clear cinematographic style that is perfect for such a closely observed documentary.

Most documentary makers manipulate their subject matter, writing scripts in advance and tweaking their subject's behaviour to create more drama. This is clearly not Gelb's method. Having the precise eye and the instinct to choose the right subject, he steps back, letting events unfold for themselves, and so they do, with each character stepping forward quietly, gently, and yet trustingly so that we get a true sense of whom they are. This is the hallmark of a great documentary maker.

Jiro Dreams of Sushi is a pleasure to watch, it will make you ravenously hungry and wanting to rush to the nearest sushi place, it will make you want to book the next flight to Japan, but it will also make you think about traditions, good or bad, and whether or not that much hard work over the course of an entire life time is worth it for a moment or two of ephemeral perfection. Perhaps it is, if we could just get our hands on some of Jiro's sushi.

nepalitimes.com

Watch trailer

GIZMO by YANTRICK

Home-made froyo

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

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

Being endowed with a wide girth, Yantrick acquired a Cuisinart ICE-21 Frozen Yoghurt Maker and has since been indulging the sweet tooth without being riddled with guilt about the midriff. This is a cool machine in every sense of the word: simple, sturdy, easy-to-use, and you surprise yourself with the ease with which you can prepare creative desserts for your guests. And it's all over in 20 minutes from start to finish.



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

The 21, by the way, doesn't stand for the 21st century, but for 21 litres (avoid the 50 litre

model unless you want to start a restaurant). This is an adequate volume for a family of six and you can easily serve a party with 10 guests, provided your desserts are so popular that they keep coming back to the kitchen for thirds and fourths.

To start, stick your freezer bowl into the coldest part of the deep freeze so that it is completely frozen. In fact, leave it there at all times so you can make your dessert immediately, otherwise it may take up to 10 hours to freeze over. You then insert the freezer bowl into the maker's base and immediately load the raw yoghurt. The fruit chunks and whatever else you want to embellish it with should be added only just before the end of the process. The yoghurt thickens and is magically frozen by the cold being transported from the freezer bowl.

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

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



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ANUJA KHADKA

From the page to the stage

UJJWALA MAHARJAN

When Samip Dhungel performed his poem *Chura* at Kala Saahitya Utsav in Jhapa in March this year, gasps of 'amma', 'wow', 'once more' filled the air. At the school where he was conducting a workshop for young poets, his poem drew similar reactions.

Seeing Samip so confident and poised on stage, it was hard to believe that the 24-year-old preferred the four walls of his room as his audience. And even though he had been a member of Word Warriors, a slam poetry group since 2011, he didn't venture out. That changed seven months ago when he attended a workshop by visiting American slam poet - Sarah Kay. Samip is now not just performing poetry, but also teaching the art.

For some, the inspiration to make the leap from page to stage comes from watching poetry performances - live or on YouTube. For others like Samip getting together with aspiring poets in a workshop

helps. A group trying to spread and promote spoken word, Word Warriors provides budding artists that gentle nudge.

Formed right after the QC Awards 2010, the first slam poetry workshop and competition in Nepal, Word Warriors was more or less restricted to its Facebook page in its early days. A handful of poets began performing at events around town and slowly the art form gained recognition. Eventually, the group started organising workshops in different venues, schools, and recently held a second inter-school slam poetry competition.

This year, Word Warriors is trying to take the slam movement outside Kathmandu in search of creative voices from all over Nepal. The art and literature festival and school visits in Jhapa were a great start for two main reasons: one, Word Warriors got an opportunity to perform alongside Nepali poets like Manu Manjil, Swapnil Smriti, Bhupin, and Buddhisagar and expose the audience filled with Nepali literary stalwarts to this new kind of art form.

Secondly, the excitement with which young students embraced slam poetry during the workshops and school visits with some teenagers attending the lit fest solely for the spoken word performances made us realise how thirsty Nepali youngsters are for such creative outlets, almost non-existent in our education system.

The next major event this year is the QC Awards: Slamming in Surkhet 2013. Organised by Quixote's Cove bookshop in collaboration with Word Warriors and Kopila Valley School, six Word Warriors will travel to western Nepal for the 10-day event which begins on 1 August where they will visit schools, perform, and train teachers. Surkhet will also host its first ever inter-school slam poetry contest.

Khotang, Pokhara, Birganj, Chitwan, and Itahari are in the pipeline with plans to reach out to as many closet poets in the country as possible. That said, raising funds has and will be a major challenge as we continue to generate momentum for what we hope will be a nation-wide slam poetry competition. 🇳🇵

Ujjwala Maharjan is a Word Warrior.

www.facebook.com/SpokenWordNepal
www.facebook.com/groups/wordwarriorsnepal

nepalitimes.com

Watch videos of Word Warriors



SOMEPLACE ELSE



PICS: PM

LHAKPA'S CHULO

The cut throat competition among restaurants in Jhameel means only the fittest (or ones with very deep pockets) survive. Several have pulled their shutters down, only to be quickly replaced. Lhakpa's Chulo is among a handful that has stuck it out for more than four years.

Nestled in a small lane off Jhamsikehl road, Lhakpa's exudes a quiet and warm ambience, like an old inn. The restaurant has an indoor as well as a garden seating and true to its name, Chulo maintains traditional Nepali décor with earthy colours on its walls and

lokta paper table mats. The menu, also made of local lokta paper, offers a modest selection of recipes from around the world. Nepali dal-bhat and Newari khaja alongside Swiss Rösti, Italian Risotto, and Thai green curry - take your pick.

For starters, we ordered fried prawn wrapped in bacon (Rs 550), one of the specials for the day. You can't really go wrong when you wrap something in bacon, but as I took a mouthful I realised that maybe fried prawn is the wisest choice. The juicy and rich combination of the two was complimented by the Thai sweet

sauce and the citrusy of lemon. Sadly, we had to savour every bite very slowly. The serving was only five pieces at Rs 110 each!

The menu for the mains read so good, it was hard to decide. Finally we settle for pork chops (Rs 590) and chicken schnitzel (Rs 550). The pork chops were topped with Sauce Robert and served with steamed vegetables and a choice of rice, home fries or mashed potatoes. As I chewed, I could feel the chops had been marinated well to let the flavours seep in. The portions were perfectly cut and the meat was cooked just right. My friend



claimed that he had been on a failed mission in Kathmandu to find good pork chops, but was thrilled by Lhakpa's creation and ate it down to the bones.

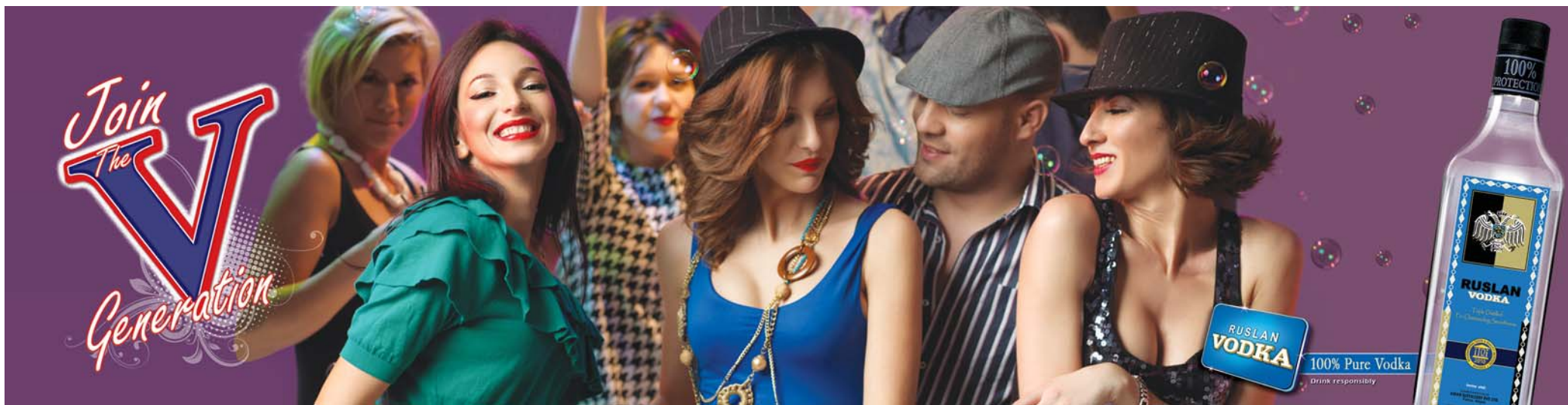
My chicken schnitzel with capers, on a layer of lemon and butter sauce, was served with home fries and fresh organic green salad. Coated with flavourful crumbs and pan-fried until brown, the chicken breasts looked like they would be

a treat. I was quite wowed by my first bite, the chicken tasted mild and went well with the pickle-like sourness of the capers. But as I dug in, I felt it was too mild and could use a little spice.

We wrapped up our meal with dark chocolate cake served with vanilla ice-cream (Rs 250). The cake was warm, spongy and like dark chocolate, not too sweet. Combined with vanilla ice-cream, it was the perfect end to the evening. I am going back. 🇳🇵

PM

How to get there: Take the lane next the temple at St Mary's parking lot. Walk straight and turn right, you will find Lhakpa's Chulo on your left.



Mystery fever



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

Twenty-five-year-old Ram Devi Shakya arrived at the hospital complaining of high fever, conjunctivitis, muscle pain, and breathing problems for a week. Doctors diagnosed her with typhoid and began treatment. When her condition did not improve, they suspected meningitis, but ruled it out after negative test results. While the physicians awaited results of her blood sample to come back from Mumbai, she was given three new antibiotics but there was no progress in her condition. Ram Devi died on the tenth day of hospitalisation. The diagnostic report from Mumbai later revealed that she was suffering from leptospirosis.

Leptospirosis comes from the Greek word leptospira which means finely coiled organisms (spirochetes). In a study done at Patan Hospital and published in the *American Journal of*

Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in 2004, leptospirosis ranked fourth (after typhoid, typhus, and pneumococcal pneumonia) as the cause of fever in over 800 consecutively admitted hospital patients. And yet for some reason leptospirosis is still overlooked by physicians and many medical colleges and residency programs don't even include the disease in their curriculum.

Leptospire are organisms which persist in the kidneys of a variety of animals including rats. Leptospirosis is acquired when water or soil contaminated with urine or reproductive fluids of infected animals gets into abrasions in our skin. The abrasions are typically followed by flu-like illness approximately one week later. In patients with mild Leptospirosis, the symptoms eventually subside. However, some like Ram Devi Shakya have severe leptospirosis, also known as Weil's Disease which is characterised by respiratory and renal complications. These complications may lead to other organ failure and eventually death if the diagnosis is not made on time and medication not started

immediately. Diagnosis is usually established by finding either high serum antibodies against leptospira or polychromase chain reaction (PCR) test to look for leptospira DNA. Neither test is readily available in Nepal.

The highest incidence of this disease is in tropical countries like ours especially during the summer. In fact this disease is perceived to be common enough that many travel books advise visitors at high risk (for example those partaking in jungle safaris or recreational water sports like kayaking) to take prophylaxis. One such drug is doxycycline, but it should only be taken after consulting with a doctor who is well-versed in the prevalence, prevention, and treatment of leptospirosis.

If the doctors who looked after Ram Devi had used doxycycline from the beginning, she might have survived. Unfortunately, this humble and inexpensive drug is not used often in Nepal. Hence the importance of knowing what are the specific fever-causing bugs in our community with which Nepalis may be infected and empirically treating with appropriate antibiotics based on that knowledge even when laboratory back up is pending (specimen sent abroad in this case) or unavailable.

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HAPPENINGS



BIKRAM RAI

MAN IN BLACK: Finance Minister Shankar Prasad Koirala (centre) arrives at Singha Darbar on Sunday evening to announce the 2013-14 budget.



DEVAKI BISTA

MADE IT: A woman provides her digital fingerprint for the voters list at district election office in Babarmahal on Monday, the last day for registration.



OUMAIMA GANNOUNI

TAKING THE PLUNGE: A young boy takes a dive into the Bagmati near Tripureswor on Monday.

LEPTOSPIROSIS WAS FIRST OBSERVED IN 1907

CAUSE:
LEPTOSPIRA BACTERIA

Transmission: When water or soil contaminated with urine or reproductive fluids of infected animals gets into human through abrasions or cuts in the skin

SYMPTOMS:

- high temperature
- sudden headaches
- chills
- nausea and vomiting
- diarrhoea
- loss of appetite
- muscle pain
- conjunctivitis
- rash

INCUBATION PERIOD
7-14 DAYS

TREATMENT:
Early diagnosis and treatment prevent complications and save lives
Take doxycycline after consulting with physician
Travellers who are likely to be exposed to contaminated water can also take doxycycline

PREVENTION:
Avoid swimming or wading in water that might be contaminated with animal urine
Avoid contact with potentially infected animals
Wear protective clothing and footwear if you know you might be exposed to contaminated water or soil
Drain contaminated water
Control rats in and around the house

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Horlicks

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Glucose is 100% glucose. Glucose is instantly available for energy since it is absorbed and utilized faster than other carbohydrates/products.

Thimphu gets the message

RAHUL GOMEZ in THIMPHU

From the Indian perspective, it does look like the opposition PDP's victory in elections in Bhutan on 13 July proved that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The ruling Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) seems to have forgotten this during its five-year rule of Bhutan until New Delhi sent a rude reminder by withdrawing subsidies for cooking gas and kerosene from India just days before the polls.

The price of vital gas and kerosene more than doubled and the DPT was swept out of power. Though scrubbing Indian subsidies could not be the only reason and Indian excuses about bureaucratic bungling could also be true, what goes without saying is that India's action triggered a political realignment in Thimphu by uniting the opposition against the incumbent DPT.

Whatever the truth, the perception in Bhutan is that India interfered in its internal politics. India could well blame ex-Prime Minister Jigme Thinley for trying to expand his country's global footprint, establishing diplomatic relations with 11 more countries in his five-year rule. But it is also true that India has been helping Bhutan not out of altruism but for its own national interest.

Thinley's global outreach shouldn't have unduly dismayed New Delhi, which had agreed to revise in 2007 the Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship that the two countries had signed in 1949. Till then, Article 2 of the treaty stated that



KUNDA DIXIT

Bhutan's incumbent rulers forgot that he who pays the piper calls the tune

'the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations'.

Through the revision in 2007, Bhutan and India were now only required to 'cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests'. This gave Thimphu the right to conduct its foreign relations as it deemed fit. The revision of the treaty was undertaken in an explicit recognition of the sovereignty of the government that the people of Bhutan were then expected to elect soon.

But Thinley irked New Delhi by playing footsie with China, which wants a robust presence in South Asia for economic reasons and to throw a shield around Tibet. It seems to be the Tibet factor that prompted Beijing to offer a package solution to resolve its border dispute with Bhutan, announced on the sidelines of the United Nations Rio+ 20 conference last summer. China said it was willing to concede its claims in the north of Bhutan in return for a quid pro quo in the country's west.

China covets territory in West Bhutan for expanding the Chumbi Valley in Tibet, which would make it easier to conduct military manoeuvres in a narrow finger of territory that protrudes down into India. However, this would bring China perilously close to the Chicken

Neck, India's strategic corridor to its northeastern states. Beijing's offer to Thimphu, therefore, was inimical to India's interests.

What really ticked off New Delhi was that Thinley chose not to keep India in the loop. He was also deemed to be extremely keen on engaging with the five permanent members of the UN (US, China, UK, France, and Russia) which India wanted kept out of Bhutan. Thimphu had bestowed honorary consul status on citizens of some of these countries residing in Bhutan.

New Delhi seems to have therefore decided to nip Thinley's plan before China's growing shadow loomed over Bhutan and India and the best way to send the message was by cutting fuel subsidies just before elections. Free lunches are a rarity in international relations and Thinley forgot that.

In New Delhi, foreign policy architects are reconciled to the fact that as a regional power, it will invite hostility of sections in neighbouring countries. But as with the blockade of the Nepal border in 1989-90, they haven't got over their urge to retaliate as and when they see India's national interests undermined, particularly vis-a-vis China. There is a price to pay: creating a long-term perception that India is a bully.

New Delhi will have to take into account that as democracy develops deeper roots in Bhutan and among its other South Asian neighbours, governments will respond to the popular will. Despots, on the other hand, face no such compulsions and are easier to manipulate. 🇮🇳

Cricket gets a political spin

Congratulate the Kashmiri cricketer Parvez Rasool, but pity him, too



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

Parvez Rasool was selected to represent Team India on the tour of Zimbabwe, his spinning abilities will now get spun to promote contesting political projects.

Indeed, the Indian cricketer's Kashmiri identity gives him a special resonance. He isn't a Kashmiri migrant but was born and raised in the northern Indian state where he honed his bowling skills even as bombs went off all around. Despite the lack of proper cricket infrastructure, Rasool overcame the terrifying odds to get into the Indian team.

For Kashmiris, Rasool's selection represents their state's fortitude and ability to keep its sanity intact in the chaos. For the rest of India, the emergence of Rasool symbolises the return of relative normalcy to the Kashmir Valley.

All these arguments, however, are forgotten in debates over the need to withdraw the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). In fact, in an astonishing example of circular reasoning, its continued



application is justified on grounds of preserving the gains from normalcy.

For Delhi, therefore, the inclusion of Rasool in the national team will be projected as evidence of the fairness of the Indian system, in cricket as well as in other sectors. But it at once becomes an argument against

those who describe New Delhi's policy in the Valley as callous.

His selection will be articulated in the public sphere as a symbol of hope to Kashmiri youth, an invitation to them to acquire marketable skills and enter what is called the 'Indian mainstream', which essentially comprises individuals in the

race for grabbing opportunities in teeming metros.

Kashmiri Muslims, however, will still find it difficult to rent a place as their boys will be periodically picked up and interrogated every time a terrorist attack takes place. Rasool himself was detained in 2009 on suspicion of transporting explosives in his cricket bag. What must have been an ignominy for him will now get spun into a story of inspiration for others who may have encountered such treatment.

Rasool will also become an argument against the Pakistani state. He will represent India's regional and religious plurality; many wouldn't miss the irony in his bowling or batting against Pakistan should such a match involving him occur.

A *Hindustan Times* report claimed in February that the government was pushing for his selection in the Indian team to 'win hearts in J&K'. It is irrelevant whether or not the news was correct. What was pertinent was the perception and hope that his presence in the Indian team could have a salutatory impact on Kashmir.

Kashmiris perhaps will feel disappointed at the thought that Rasool was selected because of politics and not his cricketing

talent. And Kashmiris who are known not to support the Indian cricket team will be in a dilemma. Will they now pray for a stellar performance from Rasool and a defeat for India? Many will find it delicious to imagine him bowling the last over against Pakistan in an ODI clincher. In such a situation, how would the Kashmiri react?

Or imagine a situation in which Rasool is declared man of the match. Considering his penchant to lace his statements with the Arabic equivalent of 'In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful' rest assured he will, in his acceptance speech, echo the lexicon of Pakistanis who erroneously perceive themselves as representing the Muslim cricket world. For many, Rasool will become a counter-argument against the idea of Pakistan.

You can't but imagine the flip side of these imagined situations. Suppose Rasool bowls a poor last over and loses the match, disappointed voices are likely to hark to his Kashmiri identity and drop innuendos about his betrayal.

The 24-year-old bears a heavy burden, in cricket and otherwise because of his Kashmiri Muslim identity. 🇮🇳
ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

BHAKTAPUR’S MITHILA INFLUENCE

The invasion of Simraongarh by Gheyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1352 had a far-reaching impact on Kathmandu Valley

BHASKAR KOIRALA

King Harisingh Deva of Simraongarh must have sat on his heavy-set chair while a pair of household staff was cross-legged on the black chlorite stone floor massaging sandalwood oil onto his feet. The masseuses must have been especially drowsy that day because of a combination of intolerable humidity, the postprandial partaking of raw beetle nut, and the soporific calls of cuckoos outside.

Despite the protestations of the chief of staff of the royal household, the servants didn’t seem to have their mind on the job at hand and the king didn’t look unduly concerned.

The year was 1352 and Simraongarh palace was located deep within the dense jungles along what is now the Indio-Nepal border in Bara and Parsa districts. Harisingh Deva was a philosopher king intrinsically disposed to self-reflection and spent a considerable amount of time pondering the question of existence and the meaning of life. He was always on a different wave-length than those around him.

Fully alert with his chin cupped in his right hand, he sat gazing around his large airy verandah that monsoon afternoon, occasionally glancing down at the sleepy servants. Destiny had placed him on the throne, but he struggled to understand why. The question continually vexed him.

A grave expression suddenly took hold over the well-groomed face of King Harisingh—he turned to his left, then right, and then slowly towards the ceiling as he simultaneously placed his hands on the shoulders of either servant indicating to them to stop moving so he could listen to a distant rumble. “Go!” he thundered to the Chief of Staff. Destiny was playing itself out before his own very eyes.

His kingdom was being invaded by the powerful and fierce Gheyas-ud-din Tughlaq of the Delhi Sultanate, who was of Turkish extraction. Less than a decade earlier the Tughlaq ruler had successfully conquered Delhi and was turning his

attention to subjugating Bengal, which he accomplished and was on his way back when he decided on a whim to attack this rather small, but culturally important outpost of the Mithila kingdom.

The Indian art historian Heinrich Zimmer, alluding to the general geography of Simraongarh and the stone sculptures and artifacts discovered there, asserted that these ‘works were important historically because of the region’s geographical position between Nepal and Tibet in the north and Java, with its famous centres of Buddhist learning, in the southeast’. Zimmer was of the opinion that the region ‘inspired to a remarkable degree both the arts and the philosophies of these two realms’, inflections as he called them of the glorious Gupta period under the Pala and Sena dynasties (c 730—1250AD).

The events surrounding the invasion of Simraongarh were going to have a far-reaching impact not just on King Harisingh’s kingdom, but also on Bhaktapur in Kathmandu Valley to the north-west. The King’s fallback option in case of an attack was to retreat to Bhaktapur, which is indeed what he did.

He was prepared for this attack and had made particularly special arrangements to safeguard a powerful tile-shaped mystical diagram (yantra) that was the family’s tutelary deity and which he had resolved to protect at all costs.

It is this yantra that is now the centrepiece of Bhaktapur’s Darbar Square and which is discretely housed within the exquisite Mul Chok or Taleju temples, accessible only via the famous golden gate of the Sun Dhoka. The gate itself is crowned by a beautiful bronze sculpture of a four-headed, ten-armed Durga which is an anthropomorphic representation of Taleju, or the human depiction of the yantra carried to Bhaktapur during the flight from Simraongarh by King Harisingh Deva and



PAST TENSE: The Mulchok where King Harisingh Deva's 'yantra' is now located in a 19th century water colour (right). Painting of the Sun Dhoka in Bhaktapur in 1853 as rendered by Henry Ambrose Oldfield (below, right). Bhaktapur Darbar Square in an early photograph from the beginning of the 20th century (below) and today (big picture).



Further readings:

A Test Trench Through the Fortifications of Simraonghar, Vidale, Balista, Torrieri, Oct-Nov 1993, Ancient Nepal, Department of Archeology, Kathmandu

Simraonghar: The Forgotten City and its Arts by Cimino, RM, Contributions to Nepalese Studies, CNAS, Tribhuvan University, Vol 13, 1986

Architecture of the Newars. Niels Gutschow 3 volumes.

Art of the Kathmandu Valley, Michael Hutt

History of Nepal series, Dilli Raman Regmi

The Art of Indian Asia Heinrich Zimmer, Pantheon Book

A Fragmentary Inscription from Simraonghar, The Ancient Mithila Capital, Riccardo Garbini, October-November 1993, Ancient Nepal, Department of Archeology Kathmandu

The stuff of Mithila

The Mithila Kingdom held sway over Kathmandu Valley twice in the past 1,000 years, its influence on the evolution of Newari culture and language has been well documented. The first period of Maithil influence was in the 11th century during the reign of Nayna Deva of Simraonghar, located in what is now Bara district, which lead very likely to the dethronement of the princes who ruled Kathmandu Valley. The second time it was the last king in Nayna Deva's dynasty, Harisingh Deva, who had to flee Muslim invaders to Kathmandu Valley. Later, the Malla king of Kathmandu married Harinsingh Deva's grand-daughter.

Thus, the Malla reign of Kathmandu Valley was heavily influenced by Maithil culture. Maithili was the official language of the court, and Newari music, art and language derived a lot from Mithila. The Shikhara architecture of the Mahaboudha (this stupa as I understand is a facsimile of the temple at Bodhagaya) and Krishna temples of Lalitpur were brought in during this period, indicating an influence not just of Mithila, but of south India on Kathmandu Valley. Indeed, there appear to be historical records pointing to

a connection between the Valley and Mithila, and more specifically between Bhaktapur and Simraonghar, even beyond to Karnataka in South India.

Given this historical perspective, the current tussle between the plains and the hills in Nepal seems petty and banal, based on an inaccurate understanding of history. And a time when relations between Nepal and India are limited to mundane politics and petty point-making, it may do well for us to remember how closely our cultures are intertwined. Instead, the lack of a dignified position by Nepal and India's micro-managing have taken away from the glory of the past.

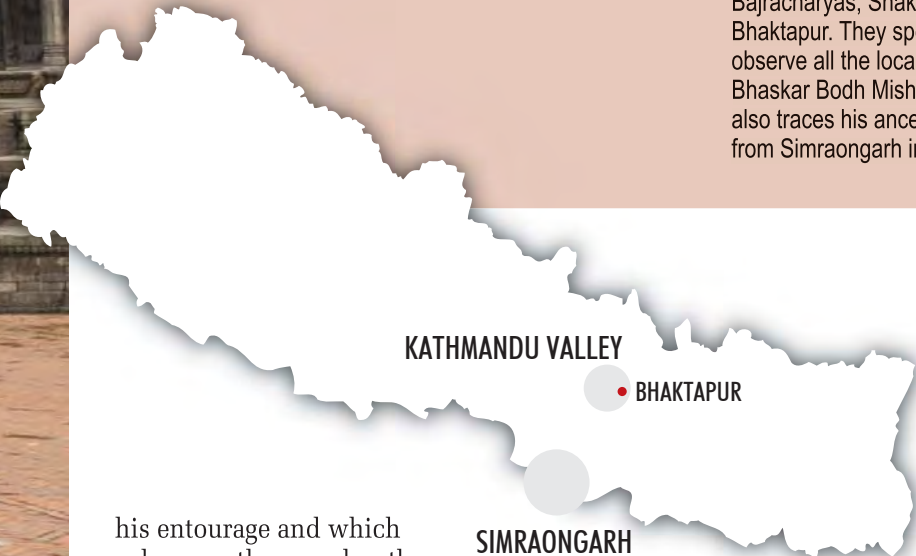
More research is required to dig out the details of these connections, and a joint Indo-Nepal archaeological project is needed of the ancient kingdoms along the plains. One could start with Simraonghar, which is a testament to the bonds between India and Nepal that pre-date both nation states.



Gurudutt Mishra (pic, above) lives in Mahapal of Lalitpur and his ancestors came to Kathmandu Valley with King Harisingh Deva's entourage more than 700 years ago. Maithil Brahmin families like the Mishra and Jhas still live in the midst of Newari families like Shresthas, Pradhans, Bajracharyas, Shakyas, Tamrakars in inner city Patan and Bhaktapur. They speak Nepali with strong Newari accents, observe all the local festivals and are indistinguishable. Bhaskar Bodh Mishra is now 93 and lives in Bhaktapur and also traces his ancestors back to the first Maithil arrivals from Simraonghar in Bhaktapur in the 14th century.



LUKAS GRIMM



his entourage and which subsequently served as the basis for establishment of a cult of the goddess called Taleju by subsequent Malla kings of Bhaktapur.

According to historian Niels Gutschow, the Mul Chok mentioned above must have been first constructed in the course of the 14th century to house the new tutelary deity of the Malla dynasty in her iconic representation as Taleju. However, what is not so clear is an explanation as to why or in what respect this yantra or iconic representation of Taleju is significant or embodied

power captivating enough that it would serve as the family god to successive Malla kings of Bhaktapur.

Even more challenging is to attempt to unravel an extremely tricky yet critical question, namely whether the origins of the aforementioned yantra can be traced back even further back than Simraonghar. The forefathers of Harisingh Deva, the immediate ascendants of Nayadeva of Mithila, were earlier ensconced in Karnataka

in South India under the overlordship of Chalukya Emperors such as Vikramaditya VI and Somesvara III. They had regularly conducted military campaigns as far north as Mithila which they managed to subdue.

Simraonghar had been a seat of power for these Karnataka commanders since around the late 11th century from which time until the first quarter of the 14th century and King Harisingh Deva's flight to Bhaktapur, a mere 250 years intervened.

The question therefore remains: is there a credible historical connection between Bhaktapur and Karnataka?

Bhaskar Koirala is doing a PhD at Peking University and heads the Nepal Institute for International and Strategic Studies.

Do or die

Interview with Surya Bahadur Thapa, *Kantipur*, 14 July

कान्तिपुर

Kantipur: Are you confident about elections taking place on 19 November?

Surya Bahadur Thapa: Ordinary Nepalis want elections since the country has been without elected representatives for far too long. And there are definite signs of progress, for example even those parties that weren't too keen on polls are now beginning to change their stance. So elections should happen on 19 November.

Shouldn't the parties first settle on contentious issues so that we don't repeat the mistakes that led to the dissolution of the CA in 2012?

We only have three months remaining before elections. If these issues can be tackled simultaneously with election preparations then such meetings are welcome. It is best we take the discussion to the floor of the CA so that we don't postpone polls.

How do you assess the four months of Khil Raj Regmi's government?

The current government was formed only to hold free and fair elections and has no political agendas. And if polls don't happen, some other understanding needs to be worked out.

This government is accused of being a foreign project.

The concerns of India and China over Nepal's internal stability and election cannot be called foreign intervention. We are in this current position because of our own shortcomings. Blaming friendly neighbours is only a sign of weakness.



And what about Nepali politicians making frequent trips to the north and south, how does that reflect on their leadership skills and decision making capacity? If the leaders were confident in themselves, we would have had a constitution by now. The entire leadership has failed and the ripple effect is evident in our politics, economy, administration, and diplomacy. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any of these chaotic foreign trips.

Baburam Bhattarai's resignation as vice-chairman of the Maoist party has put the issue of age and seniority in focus. What is your take on it?

We need to involve the younger generation at all levels to help lead the country forward. However, it is easier said than done and we have a long way to go before we can hand over leadership to the youth.

Is there any possibility of reuniting with Kamal Thapa's RPP (N)?

Although we had a talk few months ago we have major ideological differences on issues of federalism, republic, and democracy.

And what about the contentious issue of constitutional monarchy?

Times have changed and it was the people's desire to have a republic. So we will respect their wish.

What are your thoughts on the former king's cross-country trip?

He has the personal freedom to move around and express his views.

How do you think your party will fare in the elections?

After uniting with Rastriya Prajatantra Party, I am confident that we will perform much better than in 2008.

And what about the fate of the Maoist party which won a landslide victory in the last CA elections?

Without the use force and intimidation, it is going to be very difficult for the Maoists this time.

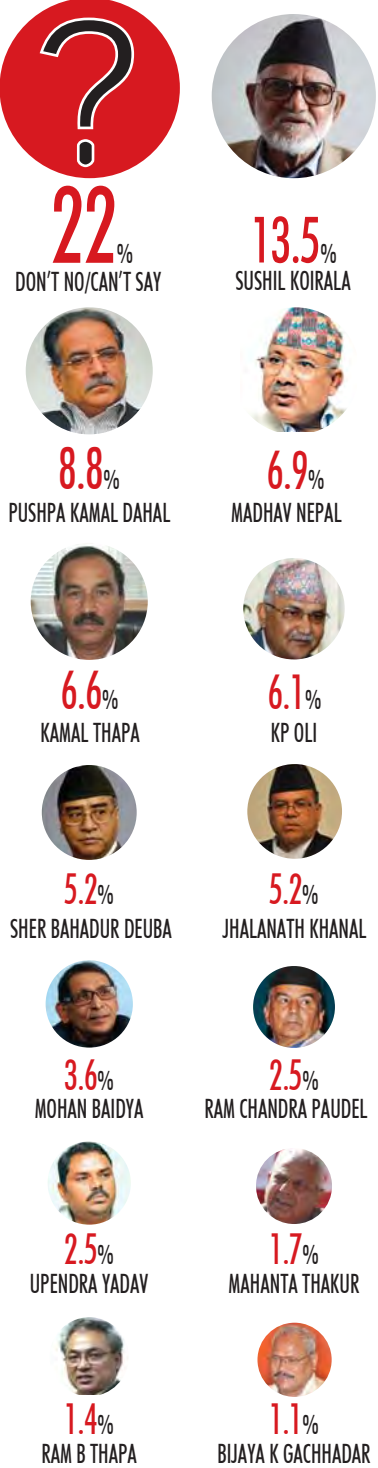
What kind of federalism does your party advocate?

There is nothing to fear about federalism as long as it is rights-based and is grounded in science. The only thing we need to keep in mind is the number of federal states. The more states there are, the greater the danger of instability.

WEEKLY BAZAR POLL #19

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 375 respondents in 12 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week's result of interviews is about the popularity of political leaders.

Who is the most trustworthy leader in the current group of active politicians?



NEPALI TWEETS

guru kafe
नेपाल र नेपालीको हितमा काम गर्ने मरिचमानको स्वास्थ्य लाभको कामना। दुइजिवे नेता भएको भए सरकारले जापान पठाइसक्ने थियो होला राष्ट्रवादको हलत
I wish Marichman Singh a speedy recovery. He was a leader who worked for the welfare of Nepal and Nepalis. If he had been a double tongued politician, the government would have sent him to Japan by now. Look how we treat a nationalist.

Ranita Khatri
सकिन्छ भने आज एकदिन त्रिशुली नदी बन्द गरेर हराएका मान्छे खोज्न जाऔं न कामेड। जायो गाडी त जसले पनि बन्द गर्न सक्छ नि।
Comrades, go stop the Trishuli for a day and search for those who drowned in the river if you can. Blocking roads and vehicles is far too easy.

Babita Thapa
टवीटरमा फुल दयाम दिने नेपाली दाजुभाई तया दिदीबहिनीहरूलाई मासिक २० हजार तलप छुट्याको छु। लोल
I have allocated Rs 20,000 for Nepalis who are on twitter full-time. Lol.

manuminakshi
कि त आरक्षण सिटमा बस्न पाउनुपर्छ कि त भिडभाडमा उभिदा आफुलाई सुरक्षित ग्रहण गर्न पाउनुपर्छ #बस
Either I should be allowed to take the seat reserved for females or feel safe standing in the aisle. #bus

Ushafi
केहि बुढाहरूको राजनीतिबाट सन्यास माग गरेजस्तै २-४ थकितहरूलाई सार्वजनिक जीवन, टुट्टर आदिबाट सन्यास दिलाउन कसैले प्रयास गरे हुने। दिक्कै बनाए।
Just like certain old politicians are asking for retirement, I wish someone would encourage two-four personalities to retire from public life and twitter. Fed up.

Sujeev Shaky
वातावरण दिवसमा प्रदुषण सम्बन्धी भाषण सुन्ने व्यक्तिहरू आफु सय गाडीको जन्तीले गरेको प्रदुषण गरेर दङ्ग भएको देखेर छक्क
The same people who don't tire of making grand speeches on Environment Day about pollution seem happy taking part in a the pollution fest wedding procession of 100 cars. Amazing.

Bhojraj Bhat
होइन यो एमालेले देशमा कति विड छरेको रहेछ दिल्हु उसका सयौं हजारौं कार्यकर्ता एमाओवादी, कांग्रेसआदि पार्टीमा गएको समाचार आइराए, अझै नसिरेका?
Every day we hear about hundreds/thousands of UML members defecting to the Maoist, Congress, and other parties. Just how many cadre does the UML have?



Politics of poverty

Bibek Poudel, *Setopati*, 15 July

सेतोपाटी

When Finance Minister Shankar Koirala declared a hike in salary of government employees during the budget announcement on Sunday evening, people immediately quipped, "Why has the state increased the salary of its staff and neglected ordinary citizens?" While the question is valid, it is a difficult one to answer given the realities of Nepal's economy.

Everyone in this country has demands. Students want free, quality education, farmers want subsidies, the unemployed want an allowance, and the poor want government assistance. But how can all these demands be accommodated by an economy that is moving at a snail's pace?

Countries that provide citizens with free education, affordable health services, and subsidies are often bought up during such discussions. But what we must not forget is that these are mostly advanced nations where the number of earners is significantly higher than the number of unemployed

and the student population. Nepal, on the other hand, has to pay for these subsidies from the pockets of a small, relatively poor taxpaying population. What is worse is that the blood and sweat of ordinary Nepalis which make these subsidies possible are being misused by those in power. For example: chartering helicopter for Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Kathmandu's road expansion drive, fuel for fancy cars, and importing gold ornaments.

The more well-off citizens there are in a country, the easier it is to support the less fortunate ones. For example when there are more employed people, setting aside allowance for the unemployed becomes an actual option. So are we always going to beg for subsidies for the poor or are we going to open up opportunities for employment and revenue? There are seven million students in Nepal, are we going to ask for free education to feed student leaders and pay for tuition classes or are we going to work to improve the quality of education so that there are more qualified Nepalis? The decision is ours.



Chair? I gave that up a long time back.

कान्तिपुर Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 18 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Regular budgets are struggling to get implemented so introducing such a big election budget is bound to have problems in implementation.”

Surendra Pandey, Former Finance Minister in *Naya Patrika*, 16 July



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Have Nepalis forgotten Dharmaraj Thapa?

SUNIR PANDEY

Dharmaraj Thapa. The very name evokes strong feelings of love of country, of Nepal's mountains, rivers and plains, and one starts humming familiar songs made famous by Nepal's best-known poet and singer.

At age 90, Thapa is bed-ridden at home in Swayambhunath. He cannot talk and doesn't recognise visitors. Thapa's life was devoted to documenting, recording, and conserving Nepal's treasure house of folk lyrics and music. At a time when Nepal didn't even have roads, he walked right across the country and travelled to the Nepali-speaking parts of north-east India in search of poetry and songs.

Today, Thapa's songs like *Nepali le maya maryo* and *Dhuru dhuru narou ama* have become eternal anthems for the Nepali nation, evoking the neglect and

exclusion that has driven Nepalis to suffer and migrate for work. The words of these songs are as relevant today as they were in the 1960s when Thapa first recorded them.

His inspiration was the traditional troubadour of Nepal, the *gandarvas*. It was Thapa who first brought the *gandarvas* to Nepal's musical mainstream and recognised their role in voicing the Nepali people's stoic acceptance of suffering and hardship. Thapa 'discovered' Jhalak Man Gandarva and brought him to the national stage, as well as another 200 singers from Pokhara's *Batlechaur* where he was born, giving them employment and even taking one on a tour of China with him.

Few know that Thapa was involved even in the democracy struggle during the Rana rule and composed the song *Prajatantra ko kaphal pakyo* where he used words and music that people



FORGOTTEN GENIUS: Ninety-year-old poet and songwriter Dharmaraj Thapa lies bedridden at his home in Swayambhunath Thapa (left). Thapa in his late 20s in this black and white photo (right).

related to in order to rouse them. The lyrics of his songs are simple, everyday Nepali words and when accompanied by the flute, sarangi, and madal they pour out the Nepali soul.

Thapa won the Madan Puraskar for his 1969 book of poetry, *Mangali Kusum*. Later he won the Jagadamba Shree for his life's work as a poet and folk musician.

Thapa's daughter, Gyanu Rana, is an accomplished singer in her own right. She says her father showed her the way. "I grew up in a musical household. He

was progressive and taught me how to sing for a cause," Rana told *Nepali Times*. Thapa took his daughter on visits to famous Nepali poets like Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Bal Krishna Sama, and Lekhnath Poudel.

Thapa was writing till four years ago when he turned 86. Gyanu Rana was by her father's side this week after he was brought home from the hospital. She said: "Now he has stopped recognising us too. And it looks like the government has also forgotten him." 🇳🇵

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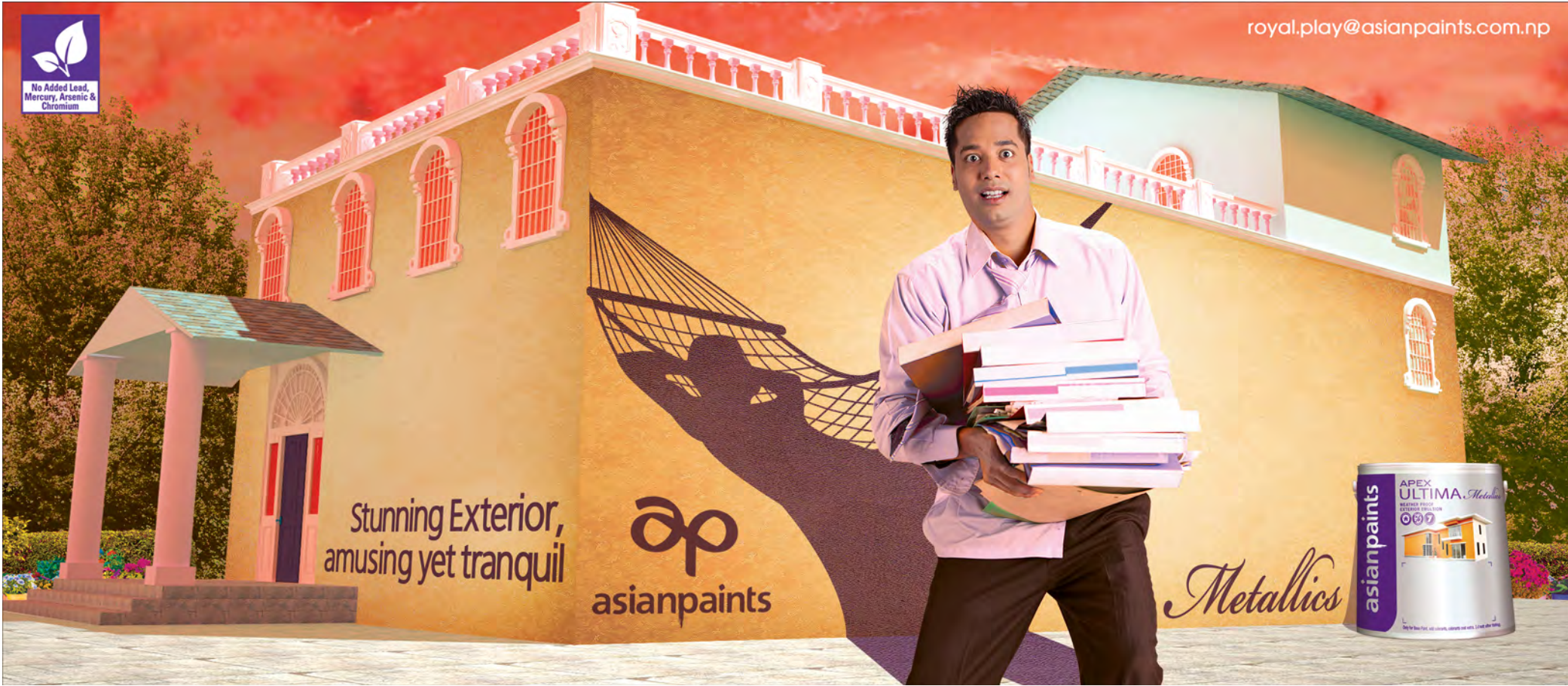
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How to make Nepalis less horny

Two headlines on the front pages of the Thursday editions of two national dailies proved just how confusing Nepali politics is.

was LKY who was once given the title of Senior Minister and later Minister Mentor because they couldn't find any other post for him. BRB has grudgingly accepted, but has

Party is not about posts but is a race between PKD and BRB to be president of the republic one day. Having both been prime minister once, they have been there and done

Miracle cure kills fifth patient

Parents keep kids home to protest school closure

Starvation can lead to health hazards

CPN-M 'welcomes' HLPC invite; seeks open talks

CPN-Maoist rejects offer for talks

I don't know about you, but the Donkey has given up reading the papers to try to make head of tail of the riddle wrapped within an enigma that are the Maobaddies. Chairman Awesomeful has tried to appease his arch-rival Comrade Red Flag, who resigned from his vice-chairman post by offering to kick him upstairs with the title of 'Senior Leader'. PKD must have got this idea when he air-dashed to Singapore with wife Sita last week, because it

dropped broad hints that he'd rather be called 'Senior-most Leader'. What this has proven, yet again, is that there is no such thing as a resignation among Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties. You either die a natural death as a card carrying member, or the party bumps you off.

that. Therefore, the possibility of a party reunion, whether or not Baidya Bah will try to foil voting in November, indeed whether there will be elections at all, now hinge on the outcome of the Plenum that starts, even as we speak, on Friday.

isn't a round table in the land with a circumference that can hold all 139 political parties. Either one has to be imported, or the partyless gnomes of Regmi Sir will have to rent the National Stadium for the purpose. There is also a bit of a problem about what to call this new organism. How about: 'Apparatus of Apartchicks', or 'Even-Higher Level Politicians Mechanism (E-HLPM)'?

Unusually reliable sources tell the Ass that the real power struggle within the Cash Baddie

It looks like the Kill Raj gobarment is in a quandary about what to do about the new all-party Gol Mech since there

Bridges help people cross rivers

Man Accused of Killing Lawyer Receives a New Attorney

Army vehicle disappears

City unsure why the sewer smells

Hospitals resort to hiring doctors

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE PROMPTING MOVE, ADMINISTRATORS SAY

So it looks like the Traffic Police are finally serious about making Nepalis less horny. This week alone, they amputated 1,000 horns from buses and trucks plying Kathmandu streets.

Bravo! Wish they'd show the same initiative in apprehending trafficked rhino horns, too.



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