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ONE AT A TIME: Children wait for their turn at a health camp organised at Siddhi, Chitwan, on Monday. More than 360 children received free basic health checkups.

NEED FOR SPEED

After weeks of delay about proportional representation candidates, the new debate is who should call the first meeting of the second Constituent Assembly. Parties can't decide who among the President and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers has the right and after two writs for or against the two have been filed, the Supreme Court is also involved.

The failure to get politics on track has meant that impunity reigns supreme throughout the country. One year after migrant worker Sita Rai was robbed and raped by airport and immigration officials (page 4), her family is still going court to hoping that justice will not elude her. The Kathmandu District Court

handed out a six-and-half year jail sentence for her rapist, but left two of the implicated free. She is now pressing charges for corruption against them but it may be another six months before the Special Court decides the case.

Families of Nepali workers and pilgrims who went missing in June 2013's Uttarakhand floods (page 16-17) still do not know whether their loved ones are dead or alive. Reports released by the Indian and Nepali government differ with accounts given by researchers and volunteers, and the locals of Far West Nepal, whose young leave in thousands for the Indian Himalaya, have all but given up hope.

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AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Nepal's nationalism has always been so fickle that we feel the constant urge to re-assert the ways in which we are different from India. One of the most egregious examples of this used to be the 10 minute difference between Nepal Standard Time and Indian Standard Time. But even by our own xenophobic standards, that was so absurd it was replaced in 1971 – with a 15 minute time difference.

It is time to scrap this oddity once and for all, not just because it makes us the laughing stock of the world, but for persuasive practical and economic reasons. If Nepal Standard Time is pushed back by 45 minutes, it will be UTC +6:30, one hour ahead of Indian Standard Time. This will save daylight, allowing Nepal to considerably reduce peak hour electricity demand and adjust the unscientific and annoying 15 minute time difference with a neighbouring time zone which is a drag on trade and business.

There are two reasons to bring up the subject this week. First, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) increased power cuts to 80 hours a week because it hasn't rained for more than two months and the rivers are running low. There is every indication that the interim government will not be able to keep its promise of limiting load-shedding to below 12 hours a day this winter. Secondly, the Indian state of Assam announced recently that it would move ahead with a controversial plan to put its clock one hour ahead of IST in order to save daylight, reduce energy



Adjusting Nepal Standard Time to UTC +6:30 would not just save energy, but also replace the unscientific 15 minute time difference with India

consumption, and probably to also assert its political autonomy. During British rule, India had two time zones: Calcutta Time and Bombay Time, which were half-an-hour GMT apart. This system was scrapped in 1947. Tea estates in Assam have a tradition of setting Bagaan Time (Tea Garden Time) one hour ahead of IST to save daylight working time.

The Assam time zone proposal is unlikely to go ahead because of the rigid and centralised bureaucracy in New Delhi. However, India is studying a proposal to advance IST by 30 minutes from the current UTC +5:30 to six hours ahead of GMT and save a whopping two billion kWh of electricity every year.

Nepal has also studied the introduction of Daylight Saving Time to delay sunset and sunrise by 1 hour and 15 minutes, reducing electricity demand in the evening peak hours in winter. Although it also means people will switch on lights in the mornings, there will be

net savings. Daylight Saving Time could reduce the country's electricity shortfall of 600MW this winter by up to 20MW and decrease powercuts by up to one hour.

Elsewhere in South Asia, efforts to enforce Daylight Saving Time have not gone well, confusing people, particularly in rural areas. This is why there is merit in the argument that Nepal should permanently set its clock ahead by 45 minutes to save daylight and round off the time difference with IST to a more acceptable one hour.

With no new major hydropower plants coming on stream in 2014, we will have to wait five more years for supply to catch up with increasing demand for electricity. Daylight Saving Time is an idea whose time has come. Importing power from India through the new proposed transmission line from thermal plants in India's Chhattisgarh will not solve the long-term shortfall.

There are other things the NEA can do to address supply side of energy. Systems loss and pilferage of mains power in Nepal is 45 per cent, the highest among Asian countries. Cracking down on power thieves alone could reduce losses by 25 per cent, which would be like adding a new 150MW power plant. Nepal will also need to invest in reservoir schemes to generate peak power in winter to offset our dependence on run-of-the-river generators. The time has now come to think about storage plants that capture monsoon runoff in reservoirs to generate peak power.

Taken together, Daylight Saving Time, adjusting Nepal Standard Time to UTC +6, cutting down on pilferage and system loss on the grid and investing on reservoir projects are ideas that save energy and rationalise our time zone. But who in government has time to think about all that when politicians are obsessed with PR lists, haggling over 26 nominated members, or the composition of the new coalition?

ON THE WEB

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DOUBLE CENTENNIAL

The 200 year anniversary of the Anglo-Nepal War and 100 years of the start of World War I are reminders that as long as the country doesn't get its politics right, its people will continue to suffer in their own land and abroad ('Double centennial', Editorial, #688). It's sad that our Nepali brothers are still fighting in foreign wars and getting killed in battlefields far from home. In the last two centuries, the government has done very little to uplift the condition of young Nepalis. As long as citizens continue migrating abroad for jobs, the state seems content. But how long are we going to let our youth leave the country and their families in a perpetual cycle of poverty and frustration?

Parichit Karki

- Great article. As a result of our political instability and weak economy, Nepal's fortunes have remained much the same in the past 200 years and even today foreign governments manipulate our resources for their benefit. What a shame.

Leena Thapa

- Congratulations to Kunda Dixit and *Nepali Times* team for an excellent and detailed coverage of more than 200 years of Nepal's history ('The pashmina war', #688). I learnt far more about the country's past from this 1,000 word piece than I did in 12 years of schooling. Why can't our social studies and history books be written in a similarly exciting, yet comprehensive manner?

Do we have to bore our children with mundane facts and dreary prose?

Gaya

- I really enjoyed the hi-story-telling abilities, makes it much more palatable than most history books, thank you.

Namah

- A well-written article, but in the confusing flow of historical events, the writer seems to have meddled up with the Gorkha (or Gurkha whichever way you choose to spell) identity. The 'real' army of Gorkha that the East India Company fought against and whose fighting qualities they so much respected, has today become the Nepali Army, which is still very much in service of the nation. The respect was so great that the British even adopted their erstwhile enemy's name into their own military units. The Purano Gorakh, the Nepali Army unit involved in the Nalapani Battle, still remains intact. It is paradoxical that outsiders still speak of 'Gurkha' with utmost reverence while we Nepalis work overtime to erase the same 'House of Gorkha' from our history. An example in this write up is when Dixit refers to Prithvi Narayan Shah just by name, but calls Jayasthiti Malla, king.

Madi

- Yes, the primary motive for the Anglo-Nepal War was to gain access to Tibet's pashmina trade, even though border disputes in the Tarai near Gorakhpur were used as an excuse to begin the war. The East-India Company wanted a way into Tibet via the Kathmandu Valley which the

Nepali rulers were unwilling to accept. However, it must also be stated that the two Tibet Wars that preceded the one in 1814, were the real cause for Nepal's defeat against the British: our treasury was depleted, we had to pay repatriation, we lost our economic monopoly in Tibet, and the army was in tatters.

Subarna

- Recruitment of Gurkha soldiers into the British Army has served the UK well and is an attractive option for young men from the Gurung, Magar, Rai, and Limbu communities. Other young Nepalis would also love the opportunity to join the British forces, however, they find it impossible. Is this fair practice? The present recruitment system would be illegal under the UK Equality and Discrimination Act and also under Nepali law. It would be very interesting if lawsuits were filed in Kathmandu and London, citing discrimination.

Puspa

- The Gurkhas have sacrificed so much yet they don't receive the same kind of recognition and credit as their comrades from other countries ('100 years of platitudes', Sunir Pandey, #688). It is so unfair to see these young men putting their lives at risk and fighting battles not their own, yet not receiving the benefits once the war is over. The British government has forgotten the Gurkhas now that their business is done.

Prakash Tamang

- It's been 200 years since Gurkha troops were recruited into the British

forces, but the martial race from Nepal is still struggling to find its rightful status at home and in the UK. Since thousands of young Rai, Limbu, Gurung, and Magar men left to join the foreign forces, they haven't had much influence in Nepal's politics either. They seem destined to remain in a limbo.

YB Gurung

- Besides providing the country's economy a massive boost, we Gurkhas, together with the Sherpas, have upheld Nepal's good name and image around the world.

Kevin Thapa

- I have a humble request for writer Deepak Aryal: please do not label certain people 'high' vis-à-vis ethnicity for two reasons ('More warlike', #688). First, ethnicity by definition does not belong to the hierarchical caste system. Second, this is the 21st century and 50 years after Muluki Ain, it's time to abolish the labels of 'high' and 'low' castes. As an intellectual, Aryal should promote equality and respect.

R Rai

- A very informative timeline, really puts into perspective the contribution of the Gurkhas in the past ('The Gurkhas: an interactive timeline', Ayesha Shakya, #688). The different mediums, the pictures, videos, and quotes are very interesting. Good work.

Pratibha Singh

RAID INTO TIBET

It's a well-known fact that even North Korea is more accessible to foreign journalists than Tibet ('50 years after the

raid into Tibet', Sam Cowan, #688). I wish there was a documentary similar to the one filmed by George Patterson on the 1964 ambush, made on present-day Tibet so that we can see the real Tibet and not the filtered version that China wants to portray to the world.

Natasha Shah

STATUTORY WARNING

No need to worry, you will have your 'much-awaited-constitution' within a year ('Statutory warning', Anurag Acharya, #688). I am sure the old boys will come up with something so adorable for media consumption that we the spectators will be cheering. Will the future constitution guide Nepali society towards the full exercising of democracy? My answer is: as long as the old boys of the current establishment are uncouth, the show is sure to be devoid of fair play.

Anonymous

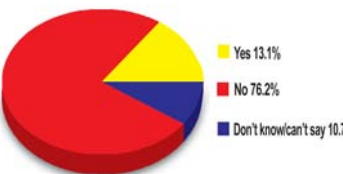


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Q. Are you satisfied with the PR nominations?

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Weekly Internet Poll # 690. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Who do you think should call the first meeting of the CA?



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And they all fall down

The long-simmering internal quarrels in the UCPN (M) now threaten to tear the party apart



INSIDE OUT

Muma Ram Khanal

The stress fractures within the Maoist party have been evident to outsiders for quite some time now. If there was any doubt, the disastrous Hetauda general convention in February last year, bought out the intra-party dispute over leadership into full public view. Baburam Bhattarai, unhappy at having to share his vice-chairmanship with Narayan Kaji Shrestha, resigned from his post as a form of protest. Subsequently all vital positions, except that of Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, were disbanded.

Even CA-2 elections could not narrow the widening chasm between Dahal and Bhattarai and ultimately, the two leaders' lack of foresight led to the party's humiliating defeat in polls. To avoid the ire of the rank and file and to save his own skin, the chairman immediately accused other parties of electoral fraud and threatened to boycott the results. But Bhattarai was in no mood to back down and seized the perfect opportunity to question Dahal's leadership. His announcement on Facebook that the UCPN (Maoist) would take part in the future CA, marked a significant change of guard.



DEVAKI BISTA

While the long-simmering internal quarrels now threaten to tear the party apart, the UCPN (M)'s fall from grace started much earlier: on the day Bhattarai dissolved the first CA. It had taken only two years in mainstream politics for the Maoists to trounce the old heavyweights in the 2008 elections. But instead of seizing this historical moment, they allowed petty political interests to take precedence on the assembly floor. Their unwillingness to compromise on ethnic federalism and failure to conclude the peace process on time, also worked against the party.

The prime cause behind the Maoist party's tragic downfall lies in its legacy of dogmatic ideology, monolithic organisation, and the culture of hedonistic consumerism that Dahal so clearly exemplifies. Even after having joined the peace-process, the Maoists continued with the same the organisational structure that they had during their days in the jungle. However, leadership during times of peace demands vastly different skill sets: a great degree of flexibility and openness and the willingness to hear out dissenting voices. The UCPN (M) antiquated form of leadership was no longer adequate to placate the three factions – Dahal, Bhattarai, Baidya – that were already conspicuous inside the party. Unsurprisingly, Baidya and co decided to part ways from the mother party right after the end of the first CA.

The process of disintegration of the Maoist party which began with the dissolution of the CA, was accelerated during the Hetauda Congress, and is currently nearing its final collapse. The defeat in November elections only widened the rift and has exacerbated the dispute over leadership. However, this is in no way a politico-ideological clash; rather it is a personal contention for party leadership between Dahal and Bhattarai.

It is highly unlikely that Chairman Dahal will meekly surrender the reins of the party to his deputy. The man will go down fighting. But after more than 20 years in waiting, the stars seem to be finally favouring Bhattarai. 🇳🇵

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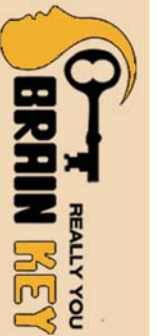
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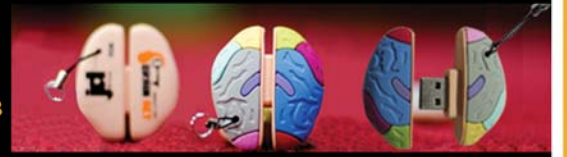


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The fight continues

Sita and her family are not ready to give up their fight against the state just yet

the officers who have close ties to party unions ‘disappeared’ many times during the past 12 month and were let off by the court last month.

“It is unfortunate that the court handed such lenient jail terms to perpetrators of a heinous crime,” Sita’s lawyer Lakshmi Rai told *Nepali Times*. People convicted of fraud can be sentenced up to five years in prison. “Giving a clean chit to the two section officers citing insufficient evidence is grave injustice to Sita and will discourage other victims from speaking out,” she added.

Sita’s high-profile case helped put the spotlight on gender violence and pressured the government to form a monitoring committee to investigate similar cases. However, the decision taken by the court in December has dampened not only the hopes Sita and her family, but also of other victims.

“Where is justice for my daughter?” questions Sita’s father Dataram, who feels let down by the country’s justice system and the glaring apathy shown by the state. He has been shuttling back and forth between Bhojpur to attend

court hearings in hopes of that the perpetrators will be put behind bars. Dataram worries about his daughter’s fragile condition as she recovers from the emotional trauma. “She still breaks down sometimes thinking about the past, blames herself, and insists on leaving the village,” he says.

Last April, the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) filed a charge sheet against Koirala, Pokharel, and Khanal. But the Special Court’s decision on the corruption case involving the immigration officials is pending until Kathmandu District Court’s recent decision on fraud is made available. It may take as much as one week to several months for the district court’s decision to be available.

The family still holds out hope that the Special Court will hand out maximum punishment to the immigration officials and provide full compensation for Sita. “I am sure our appeal would have been heard by now if we had the right connections, but we are helpless so all we can do is wait,” admits her father.

BHRIKUTI RAI

When Sita returned to Nepal in November 2012, after three years of working in Saudi Arabia as a domestic help, she had no idea how quickly her life would turn into a nightmare. The 20-year-old from Jarayatar, Bhojpur was arrested for possessing a fake passport at the airport, taken to the immigration office in Kalikasthan for interrogation where she was robbed by non-gazetted officer Somnath Khanal of her hard-earned savings. Constable Parshuram Basnet,

who had promised to make sure she reached home safely, then took her to a lodge in Old Bus Park and raped her repeatedly through the night. In April, the Kathmandu District Court found Basnet guilty of rape and handed down a five and half year sentence and a fine of Rs 50,000. Then in December, the same court charged Basnet along with Khanal with fraud and sentenced them to one year in prison with Rs 5,000 in fine. After Khanal was caught, he confessed that section officers Tika Ram Pokharel and Ram Prasad Koirala were also involved. All three were suspended, but

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Predator state, #636
Justice interrupted, #640
I wanted to murder whoever did this to my daughter, #563

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The path to altruism

As mankind tries to solve new, global challenges, we must also find new ways to cooperate and the basis for this cooperation must be altruism



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MATTHIEU RICARD

“Cooperation,” the Harvard University biologist Martin Nowak has written, is “the architect of creativity throughout evolution, from cells to multicellular creatures to anthills to villages to cities.” As mankind now tries to solve new, global challenges, we must also find new ways to cooperate. The basis for this cooperation must be altruism.

The desire to help others without consideration for ourselves is not just a noble ideal. Selflessness raises the quality and elevates the meaning of our lives, and that of our descendants; in fact, our very survival may even depend on it. We must have the insight to recognize this, and the audacity to say so.

Humanity faces three monumental challenges: ensuring everyone decent living conditions, improving life satisfaction, and protecting our planet. Traditional cost-benefit analysis struggles to reconcile these demands, because they span different time frames. We worry about the state of the economy from year to year; but we consider our happiness over the course of a lifetime, while our concern for the environment will mainly benefit future generations.

But an altruistic approach requires few trade-offs. A considerate investor will never speculate recklessly with his clients' life savings, despite the potential gain for himself. A caring citizen will always think first how his actions affect his community. A selfless generation will exercise care with the planet, precisely in order to leave a livable world to its children. Altruism makes us all better off.

This vision of the world may seem idealistic. After all, psychology, economics, and evolutionary biology have often claimed that humans share an essentially selfish nature. But research over the past 30 years indicates that true altruism does exist and can extend beyond kin

and community to encompass the welfare of humans generally – and that of other species. Moreover, the altruist does not have to suffer for his good deeds; on the contrary, he often benefits indirectly from them, while the selfish actor often creates misery for himself as well as others.

Studies have also shown that an individual can learn to be altruistic. Neuroscientists have identified three components of altruism that anyone can develop as acquired skills: empathy (understanding and sharing the feelings of another), loving kindness (the wish to spread happiness), and compassion (a desire to relieve the suffering of another).

Societies, too, can become more altruistic (and may even enjoy an evolutionary advantage over their more selfish counterparts). Research on the evolution of cultures suggests that human values can change more quickly than our genes. Thus, if we are to engender a more caring world, we must first recognize the importance of altruism – and then cultivate it among individuals and promote cultural change in our societies.

Nowhere is the need to cultivate this recognition clearer than it is in our economic system. The unrealistic pursuit of endless quantitative growth

places intolerable strains on our planet and widens inequalities. But reversing that growth would create other problems; forcing people to compete for diminishing assets and resources would spread unemployment, poverty, and even violence.

So a balance must be struck: the global community must lift 1.5 billion people out of poverty, while the excesses of the world's richest consumers – which cause the vast majority of ecological degradation – must be limited. We need not impose more taxes to achieve this, but we can persuade the wealthy that the eternal pursuit of material gain is both unsustainable and unnecessary for their own quality of life.

This concept of “sustainable harmony” can be promoted by publishing indices of personal well-being and environmental preservation, alongside standard GDP data. The government of Bhutan, for example, already accounts for the “social wealth” and “natural wealth” of its people, in addition to its GDP figures.

We could also establish a stock exchange, alongside traditional securities markets, comprising so-called ethical organisations, such as social enterprises, cooperative banks, microcredit agencies, and fair-trade groups. Several initiatives – for example, in Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom – have already taken small steps in this direction.

Small steps lead to big changes. As the value of altruism becomes increasingly obvious, the new approach will spread through the economy, benefiting all of society, future generations, and the planet, too. 🇳🇵

Matthieu Ricard, a French Buddhist monk who resides at Shechen Monastery in Nepal, holds a doctorate in molecular genetics and runs 130 humanitarian projects through his organisation Karuna-Shechen.

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Trading neighbours

The Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industry is all set to organise the first ever Nepal-India Trade Expo in the district. The 10-day event, being organised in association with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and will begin on 13 February.



Organisers expect more than 200 stalls. “Products from India and Nepal as well as other SAARC countries will be showcased at the festival,” said the organisers. “The expo is aimed at promoting Nepali

products and boosting Nepal's exports to India,” added Ashok Kumar Vaidya, president of the Birgunj Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

India is Nepal's major trade partner and accounts for two-thirds of its total exports and imports.

Breaking records

Etihad Airways is in a celebratory mood after recording its highest ever passenger and cargo volumes in 2013. Nearly 12 million passengers flew with Etihad Airways last year, marking a significant increase from 10.3 million that flew in 2012.



PAN discount

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal is offering a 0.25 per cent discount to customers applying for a retail lending product if the customers produce their PAN cards. “While this offer is aimed at providing greater benefit to the customers, the bank also hopes that the initiative will help in supporting the government in its tax drive,” reads the press release.

Mean clean

LG recently launched a new series of vacuum cleaners in the market. The new models-VC3320NNT, VC3318NNT, and VC2316NND- equipped with a range of attractive features are available in sparkle silver, sparkle red, and sparkle blue.



Spreading warmth

Gorkha Brewery has collaborated with Nepal Red Cross Society to distribute 500 blankets to the districts worst hit by cold wave in the Tarai. The brewery has also been supporting Shree Durga Primary School in Mukundapur, Nawalparasi.

Star power

NMB Bank has appointed popular Nepali football star Rohit Chand as their ambassador to endorse the bank's products and services. As per the bank's statement, Rohit will be associated with the bank for one year.



Smart up

HUAWEI, a Chinese telecom brand launched a series of its smart phones at CAN Infotech last week. The company has introduced a total of eight models in the Nepali market.

Baked goods

Asian Biscuit and Confectionary recently launched Goodlife biscuits in the market. “The company aims to change the habit of Nepali consumers from buying international brands to locally made biscuits,” reads the press release.



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Spreading out

Laxmi Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha, a subsidiary of Laxmi Bank opened four new branches around the country. With the latest additions, the number of branches has now reached 18.

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Hemanta's home in the wild

One of Nepal's foremost tiger and rhino conservationist, Hemanta Mishra, began his career in 1967 as part of the government's pioneering team that created Chitwan National Park in 1973. He then went on to help set up a network of protected areas in the Tarai and the Himalayas. In 1987, the native of Kuponhole was awarded the prestigious J Paul Getty Conservation Prize for his outstanding efforts in protecting the country's endangered species.

Mishra, who has a PhD in natural resource management from the University of Edinburgh, joined the World Bank in Washington DC in 1992 as an environmental specialist. A decade later, he moved to Manila to work with the Asian Development Bank. He also did a teaching stint at George Mason University in DC. The author of *The Soul of the Rhino* and *The Bones of the Tiger*

(see box), Hemanta's next book, *Nepal's Chitwan National Park: A Handbook*, is scheduled for publication in April.

Mishra is currently based in DC and works as an international advisor for Humane Society International, an animal welfare organisation. But his deep concern for the fate of Nepal's wildlife, brings the 68-year-old biologist back to his homeland frequently. Mishra spoke to Lucia de Vries just after his return from the annual Elephant Festival in Sauraha, where the Tourism Association of Chitwan honoured his contribution to eco-tourism in the region and his lifelong conservation work.

Lucia de Vries: How was the Elephant Festival?
Hemanta Mishra: It was a fantastic display of various ethnic groups living in harmony with nature. The people of

Sauraha have managed to accomplish what Kathmandu often cannot: bring everyone together for a common cause. The locals understand that their livelihoods depend on the wild animals and vice versa. Communication and cooperation between park authorities, tourism entrepreneurs, and local communities have greatly improved.

What is your assessment of wildlife conservation efforts in Chitwan?
I went out into the jungle every day and am very pleased to report that once I saw six rhinos in just an hour. I spotted all deer species, lots of monkeys, some mammals, reptiles, and many birds. No tigers, but I did not expect to see them. The numbers and varieties of wildlife that I observed, indicate that poaching seems to be under control.

How is the state of working elephants in the area?
In the past there were few tourists; consequently few working elephants. With the boom in visitor numbers, elephants today are treated like beasts of burden with little care and compassion. State-owned animals are less worked and better treated than the private ones and fortunately, more and more tourists are speaking out against their exploitation. I am told that TUI, a major European travel company, removed elephant safaris from its itineraries. This should be wake up call for the industry to establish welfare standards and monitoring, to ban elephant smuggling from India, and train mahouts in elephant management.

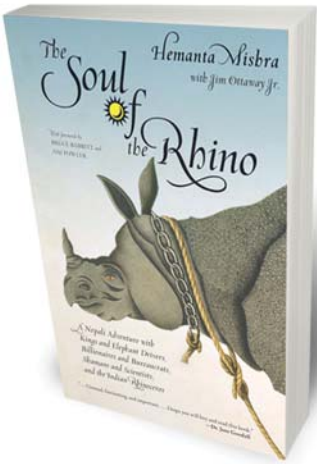
What are some of the challenges that young conservationists are likely to face?
I believe Nepal's future lies in protecting and capitalising on our natural beauty, particularly our unique network of protected areas, which we have religiously developed for the past four decades. How successful we are in the years ahead depends on the commitment of the few young conservationists I met during my visit here.

I have often joked that Nepal has three religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and tourism. To preserve tourism we need to protect the country's main currency — our wild flora and fauna and our cultural heritage. The good news is that we are already leaders of eco-tourism in the region. However, I worry about whether we have learnt to live with our own successes particularly when it comes to tourism in critical ecosystems like Chitwan. The proliferation of hotels coupled with the missionary zeal of their owners to maximise profits at any cost often make me wonder: are we killing the goose that lays the golden egg?

nepalitimes.com
For longer interview

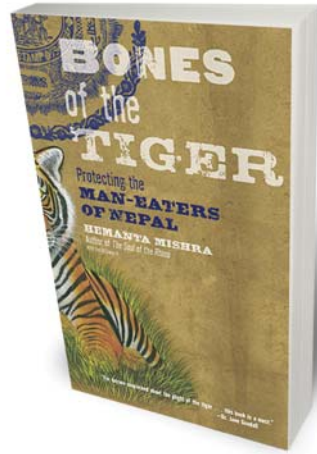
OF RHINOS, TIGERS, AND MEN

The Soul of the Rhino charts Hemanta Mishra's unique journey and struggles in saving the magnificent one-horned animal. From dealing with politicians, fellow scientists, elephant mahouts, and even the Nepali royal family, one cannot help but feel inspired by the sincerity and passion that Mishra displays when it comes to saving the rhinos that he cares so much about. The book is an enlightening read that provides a complete commentary on wildlife management.



The Soul of the Rhino, 2008
Lyons Press, USA, 256 pp

Mishra's second publication, *Bones of the Tiger*, is a captivating memoir of his early years in Chitwan National Park. It has fascinating insights on Nepal's tigers, all the way from the early hunting expeditions, the royal patronage that led to the setting up of the sanctuary, and tiger research and relocation. The book makes a significant contribution to the endeavour to ensure the survival of the wild cats until the next Year of the Tiger in 2022.



Bones of the Tiger: Protecting The Man-Eaters of Nepal (2010)
Lyons Press, USA, 256 pp

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Picture gallery

close to 30 orphans, mostly local children for whom they provide accommodation, food and education. Committee secretary Sardar Harpal Singh says that they have ambitious plans for the children, including taking them on a trip to the holy city of Amritsar in India.














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EVENTS



EASEL WORK, learn the basics of painting landscapes in water colour, and drawing and painting portraits. *18 January for portraiture, 25 January for landscapes, seats limited, Park Gallery, Pulchowk*

Climate+Change, an awe-inspiring educational science exhibition about climate change and Nepal's Himalaya. *December to April, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal*

Maghe Sankranti, a month of reading Swasthani, a pilgrims' tales of the Kathmandu Valley of yore. *15 January to 14 February*

Vice versa, an exhibition of paintings by Saroj Bajracharya. *4 to 18 January, 11am to 5pm, Sarwanam Art Gallery, Kalikasthan*

Of the young, listen to Anil Chitrakar expand on entrepreneurship opportunities for engaging the youth. *9 February, 4pm, free entry, Nepal Bharat Library, New Road*

Football mania, gather your team and beat the upstarts to become champions of astro-turf and win up to

Rs 70,000 in prize money. *Rs 6,000 per team, 11 January, 8am onwards, Shantinagar Futsal, 9813365655, 9813981802, 9808051058*

The spoken word, another month, another round of poetry jamming with the best slam poets around. *11 January, 3pm onwards, The Yellow House, Sanepa*

Made in Nepal, join over 150 makers and sellers of quality Nepali products and services. *13 to 16 February, 10am onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap, 9841578957, nyef@fncci.org*

Open market, sales galore every first and third week of the month, with great food and music. *11 January, Embassy Restaurant, 9818790223*



SALUT, be one of over 550,000 students all over the world to learn French. *Session starting on 27 January, Alliance Francais Centre, Teku*

Sonam Losar, the Tamang community celebrates new year. *31 January*

DINING

Lal Durbar Restaurant, authentic Nepali dinner with cultural shows. *Hotel Yak & Yeti, Darbar Marg, (01)4248999, reservation@laldurbar.com*



DRAGON CHINESE RESTAURANT, try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. *Lakeside, Pokhara*

Saigon Pho, spacious interior with authentic Vietnamese dishes. *Lajimpat*

Yak Restaurant, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus and spicy pork spare ribs. *Boudha, Kathmandu*

Tian Rui, if you're looking for genuinely good Chinese food this restaurant is the place to go. *Thapathali*

Mulchowk, the blend of culinary expertise and charms of a bygone era. *Babarmahal*

Byanjan Grill, its open patio is a great place to sit, enjoy a book, take in the view, and gorge on delicious cuisine when the hunger kicks in. *Barahi Chok, Lakeside-6, Pokhara, (061)466271*

Wunjala Moskva, treat your palette to Newari and Russian dishes in the lush garden with ancient trees and trickling streams. *Naxal, (01)4415236*

Pack my lunch, mother's cooking delivered to your doorstep. *9803496546, www.facebook.com/packmylunchnepal*

Salt & Pepper Restro Lounge, espresso, mocha, latte, frappuccino, cocktails, liquor, beers and flavoured shishas, with an outdoor lake-view terrace. *Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463484, 9846210568, www.saltandpeppernepal.com*

Club Amsterdam and Café Bar, great food, exotic cocktails, live band, BBQ, and more. *Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)463427*



GHAR-E-KABAB, serving the best of north Indian cuisine, with live Sarod recitals on some days. *Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg*

MUSIC



NEW STUFF, the rock outfit Underside release their first EP as they perform live. *11 January, 6pm onwards, Purple Haze, Thamel*

Andromakers, let the all girl duo charm you with their jingles, especially for fans of Björk, Coco Rosie, Portishead or Massive Attack *Rs 200, 13 January, 6pm, Café des Arts*

Starry nights, munch on the tenderloin with Ciney Gurung performing live. *Rs 1,499, 3 January, 7pm onwards, Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999, Ext. 7520/7515*

Shastriya Sangeet, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon night. *30 January, 3:30pm, Ram Mandir, Battisputali*

Kripa Unplugged, young Nepali musicians and seasoned veterans give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. *http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged*

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

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Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818



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Andauli, West Chitwan, www.barahijunglelodge.com

Atithi Resort, a perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food of your choice.

Shantipatan, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760 / 400207, info@atithiresort.com



Endnote

Martin Chautari and Kathmandu University call for papers for the Fifth Annual Media Research Conference. As in previous years, the programme will focus on critical and interdisciplinary discussions on Nepali media. Interested media researchers, educators, and students can send their work based on the following criteria:

Work can be in either Nepali or English. 500-word abstracts are to be sent by email, post, or delivery to MC or KU

offices by 14 January
Decision on abstracts will be taken by 19 January
Final paper shall be sent by 15 April
No remuneration but outstanding papers will be published by MC and KU

27 April, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel, Kavre

(01)4102027, conference@martinchautari.org.np, media.hattiban@ku.edu.np, hmu@ku.edu.np



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15 to 17 January, Thames College; 20 to 24 January, Sagarmatha Educational Academy; 26 January onwards, East Nepal

Getting warmer

The ongoing Climate+Change exhibition brings exciting programmes this week:

January 9, screening of *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* by Sam Bozzo and a talk on the late conservationist Huta Ram Baidya's work in the Save Bagmati River campaign. 5.30pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

January 11, training for children to make cloth murals and contribute their individual works to a larger work that will be installed by the artist Saran Tandukar at the NAC building. 12 to 2pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

Entry and participation are free of cost

Climate+Change
Runs to April, Nepal Art Council
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DUKSANGH SHERPA
in LO MANTHANG

Time, which had passed Mustang by until recently, is now catching up with this once-forbidden kingdom, one of the last-remaining showcases of what Tibet used to be like.

But even here, in this remote district of Nepal that juts out into the Tibetan Plateau, the world is catching up. Mustang is a land of lore: enchanting stories of the monastery of Lo-Gekar built by Guru Rinpoche, the famous red cliffs of Drakmar, the walled town of Lo Manthang and the presence within it of King Jigme Prabal Bista, a direct descendant

of Ame Pal who established the kingdom of Lo.

Just as there are myths about Mustang, there are also misconceptions. One of them is the advice to avoid going there during its harsh winters. It is cold up there at 3,500m, no doubt, but it is mostly sunny and as long as the wind is not blowing the afternoons can actually be a balmy 15 degrees.

The great thing about wintering in Mustang is that you have the place all to yourself: there are hardly any tourists and the locals have all moved down to Kathmandu or Pokhara. But go there in December before the snow arrives and the temperature is still bearable, and be mesmerised by its magical wonders in peaceful solitude.

The other myth is that Mustang is remote. Not anymore. After flying to Jomsom, or driving up from Pokhara you have the option of the new motor road (*see map*) to Lo Manthang, or the river road in lorries that drive up the Kali Gandaki in the dry season. Lo Manthang has been linked to Kora La on the China border since 1999, and the highway linking Upper

Mustang to Jomsom to the south has taken 15 years. The Mustang DDC and VDCs along the way contributed to the budget allocated by Kathmandu to fund the construction. A national policy requiring all district capitals to be connected to the highway grid got Jomsom connected to Pokhara. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported the remaining road construction from Kagbeni to Samar, and the final stretch from Samar to Shyangmochen recently was added.

Today, there are trucks, tractors and jeeps where hiking and riding horses was the only way to get around. There were some misgivings, especially among tourism entrepreneurs, that the road would kill tourism. But the roads have increased accessibility, increased the number of tourists and added to the region's income. Despite the road, villagers who can still afford to keep horses say that horses will never completely disappear since they will be needed to venture to side valleys. The highway is still blocked by snow or monsoon rains, and horses are still needed along the main trail.

The long-awaited completion of the motor road has been greeted with enthusiasm by locals, but it is crucial to understand and assess the impact it is going to have on the delicate environment of the arid trans-Himalaya, the sensitive culture and the local

economy which depends on trade with Tibet, and tourism.

Conservation officer Santosh Sherchan with the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) is concerned about balancing development and conservation. ACAP has been working in Mustang since 1992, when the restricted area was opened to limited tourism. Besides enforcing an Environmental Impact Assessment for projects, ACAP works to try to preserve the fragile culture of Mustang's Lobas. ACAP may also have to revise rules on whether to keep, reject or reduce the special permit fee structure. A fair portion of the \$500 fee that ACAP charges every tourist for a 10-day permit is supposed to go to Upper Mustang, but local authorities complain that this hasn't happened.

The wheels of Mustang's development are now in motion. Where once the only wheels were prayer wheels there are now tyres churning up the dust along the dirt highway past the holy Lo-Gekar. One wonders whether Guru Rinpoche would approve, or did he preordain it? 🚗

nepalitimes.com 🖱

On a high horse, #621
The future catches up with Mustang, #621

The wheels of time bring once-remote Mustang closer to the world

WINTERING IN MUSTANG



MAYA BISTA

Maya Bista from Tsarang, a village below Lo-Manthang feels a lot more comfortable travelling these days, now that the road is there. The 45-year-old runs Maya's Inn in Tsarang and says transporting supplies is now a lot easier and cheaper. What used to cost Rs30 per kg to bring up from Jomsom by mule is now only Rs13. Her only point of concern is that trekkers who used to stop in Tsarang can now go directly to Lo Manthang. Bista has also seen a spurt in the number of Nepali tourists coming up from Pokhara and Kathmandu now that the road is there.



THE BUTLER



Lee Daniels is a very particular kind of filmmaker. His films are harsh, over the top, in your face, full of atmosphere and energy, not particularly subtle but always powerful, and to date almost always dealing with various aspects of race in the United States.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

While I deeply disliked 2001's *Monster's Ball* (too histrionic) which Daniels produced and won Halle Berry an Oscar for Best Actress, missed *Precious* (2009) an acclaimed film about a sexually abused young black girl (I could not bring myself to watch it due to the subject matter), I did review *The Paperboy* which came out in 2012 in this column. It was only then that I began to realise that, perhaps, with a little honing Daniels could become

a truly great director. With this year's *The Butler*, Daniels has received accolades, but fallen a little short of making a truly great film. It is important to understand when viewing and reviewing cinema that there are many disparate aspects that must gel perfectly in order for an exceptional film to emerge. A great script is usually the place to start and unless the director is truly inept and the casting director a fool, usually a pretty decent film is guaranteed. *The Butler* is unusual in particular because while it is a more than decent, and in fact rather moving film, it has emerged from a patchy script by Danny Strong with no real coherence -neither historically nor emotionally. The film is loosely based on the life of Eugene Allen – an African American man who served as a butler at the White House for 34 years. In the film, Allen's character is renamed Cecil Gaines

and is played by the always brilliant Forest Whitaker. As we move through the film chronologically following Gaines' journey as a house slave from Macon, Georgia to his move to Washington DC, and his hiring at the White House we are confronted with the knowledge that great acting (based on great casting of course) can truly elevate relatively mediocre writing. While this is Whitaker's film and carry it he does – he is helped by a string of wonderful performances by Oprah Winfrey as his wife Gloria, Cuba Gooding Jr as Carter Wilson, the head butler at the White House, and of course an array of stalwarts as the various presidents with Robin Williams as Eisenhower, James Marsden as Kennedy, Liev Schreiber as Johnson, and Alan Rickman as Reagan.

Gaines' story is an extraordinary one – a story of stoic hard-work against a backdrop of horrific oppression and terrifying ignorance – it is a shame that this film could neither embrace the gravity of the historical events that Gaines experienced and witnessed firsthand nor fully flesh out the toll it took on his personal life in his choice to dedicate his life to service as a black man at the White House. Still, *The Butler* is a fine film – lifted up to a certain level by its actors, the intentions of its director, and with moments of tolerable writing which when wielded by true professionals can cause tears to come to the eyes.

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HAPPENINGS



TEA TIME: President Ram Baran Yadav (left) welcomes Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai at a tea party hosted by the former at Shital Niwas, Maharajgunj on Tuesday.



HEALTH CHECK: A woman waits for her turn at a health camp at Nimbuwatar in Chitwan.




LET'S CELEBRATE: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae attends the 348th birth anniversary celebration of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru in Kupondole's Gurudwara Guru Nanak Satsang.



NEW RIDE: New taxis bought by the Airport Passengers Transport Service Management on display at Tribhuvan International Airport on Sunday.

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Set against a canvas of midnight blue, a man lies fast asleep. The same man appears again, only this time he is suspended in mid-air. He nestles within a cocoon of pure-white feathers, like a celestial half-bird, half-man. One of the feathers gently drifts down to the dreaming man.

For his richly metaphorical exhibition, *Vice Versa*, artist Saroj Bajracharya (pictured) draws on experiences of sleep paralysis and how he imagines an other-worldly self communicating to him through dreams. The intrigue posed by the 12 paintings on display at Sarwanam Art Gallery might seem hard to grasp at first, but it is this sense of mystery that manages to captivate.

The phrases 'poetic' and 'quietly evocative' come to mind when one examines Bajracharya's creations. The light colour palette in the acrylic paintings evokes a sense of whimsicality and light-heartedness. Yet, his work carries melancholic undercurrents as well.

Subjects are often placed in the centre.



HARIZ BAHARUDIN

They stand, a solitary figure lost amidst the empty space of pale blue skies, or green rice fields. Recurring symbols include astronauts, birds, feathers - all of which suggest the absence of a sense of belonging. Referring to his older series *Inheriting Statelessness* (2012), he explains that once the astronaut is in the atmosphere, he no longer belongs to any country. Says Bajracharya: "He is out there - free. He belongs to the entire universe."

The feeling of not being tethered to anything stems from Saroj's childhood, where he recounts himself as being a 'misfit'. While his friends played outside, he would stay indoors, dreaming in one corner

of the room or sketching. For Saroj, the creative process is, therefore, very much an introspective one. He contemplates, draws on his subconscious and then works consciously.

The paintings are also an accurate reflection of the 37-year-old's journey and growth as an artist. "Previously, I was not conscious enough as an artist. Now, my thoughts have turned to a recurring theme," explains Bajracharya.

Although the exhibition has received positive reviews so far, Saroj admits that his journey is not without its struggles. The abstract nature of his work makes it difficult for people to understand. Thus,

Drawing from solitude and silence

it creates friction between him and the audience.

With a few galleries in the city, Bajracharya admits the contemporary art scene in Nepal still needs time to bloom and young artists need more encouragement

and opportunities to feel confident and start experimenting with abstract pieces. Bajracharya, who has been a mentor to his younger colleagues, says: "To them, creativity is something found in heaven. They think it's difficult to achieve." But he suggests they only need to look within themselves for inspiration. 🇳🇵

Toh Ee Ming

Vice Versa: Influence of Life and Art Runs until 18 January 11AM-5PM (Closed on Thursdays) Sarwanam Art Gallery, Kalikasthan,

nepalitimes.com

See photo gallery
See interview

Sun Café and Bar

It is easy to walk right pass Sun Café, the newest addition to Jhamsikhel's ever expanding food map. Unlike many in the area that rely on extravagant and often loud décor to attract patrons, the owners - who also run Bhumi in Lajimpat and Degga in Kumari - have kept it simple. Except for a board with the restaurant's name (which is easy to miss if you are not actually looking), there is little to announce its arrival.

Sun offers both indoor and outdoor seating in the form of a small patio, quixotic for soaking up the winter sun on a lazy Sunday afternoon. But if it's rush hour, give the terrace a miss and seat yourself inside to avoid the smog and clamour from the street.

While the earthen walls of Sun are decorated in Mithila motif, the menu is a melting pot of cuisines from all over the world. Settling on what the restaurant does best may take a while, so save time by asking for suggestions.

Too hungry to know any



SOMEPLACE ELSE

better our party of four ordered meat-heavy starters: bacon and cheese balls (Rs 260), chicken wings barbeque (Rs 300), our choice and chicken souvlaki (Rs 320), and chicken croquettes (Rs 340), which is what the friendly, young waiter recommended.

The bacon and cheese balls, although took a good while to

arrive, were worth the wait. This popular appetiser has been abused by many restaurant kitchens around town, but at Sun it's a cheesy and meaty delight. Our second order was, however, less impressive. The chicken wings looked and tasted more like Indian kebabs and the masala on the top was too overpowering, leaving our senses more confused than satiated.



PICS: SR

The chicken souvlaki was definitely a far better bet. The Nepali version of this beloved Greek finger-food of pork or lamb pieces grilled on a skewer (served with or without pita bread), had tender and juicy chicken cubes, lightly marinated, and served with a piquant dip whipped up from mayonnaise, pepper, and onions. So were the chicken croquettes, which boasted a deep fried exterior and a succulent interior.

For mains we opted for the potato rosti and tofu (Rs 390) which basically was tofu in a tomato-ginger sauce and mashed potato. The tomato-ginger sauce was a bizarre concoction of salt and sweet and this is what spoilt the dish for us.

But we were glad we saved the best for the end: Sun's special burgers and sandwiches. The bun for a change doesn't break and holds the freshly made patty and a host of other fillings well together giving one delicious mouthful after another.

Unfortunately, work prevented us from dabbling in the bar menu. But an evening visit to Sun surely beckons: the prospect of a crisp cocktail in hand to wash down a plateful of those lovely souvlaki is too hard to turn down. 🇳🇵

Sunaina Rana

How to get there: Sun Café is located opposite Epic Bikes, a few metres from Café Soma in Jhamsikhel.

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Legally lethal

Many nations like Nepal have abolished capital punishment, however, others like the US, China, India, and Indonesia continue to use the death penalty as a means of deterring their citizens from committing heinous crimes.



DHANYANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

And while the official number of executions in the republic is not known, China tops the list of countries carrying out death penalty with figures easily in the thousands per year, followed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the US.

Hanging was the preferred method of execution in the UK until 1998 when it was abolished under all circumstances. Many Muslim countries and India still practice hanging. In the US, both hanging and firing squads were used, but hanging became the method of choice.

Then in the late 1870s, scientist Thomas Alva Edison invented the incandescent light bulb that transformed human life as it was known then. Much to Edison's chagrin, this electric invention influenced the

discovery of the electric chair for execution. Gas chambers soon followed. But since electric chairs and gas chambers periodically malfunctioned, it was necessary for authorities to find a better, more efficient method. Finally the American government settled on lethal injections for execution.

Dr Jay Chapman, the medical examiner for the state of Oklahoma, first devised a cocktail of three commonly used anesthetic agents in 1977. All three drugs are routinely used in hospitals including in Nepal for saving lives. In the US, the convicted person is first injected with sodium thiopental which is a barbiturate followed by pancuronium bromide, a muscle relaxant, an extremely common drug used in intensive care units. This is then finally followed by a well-known, life-saving (except in this situation) drug, potassium chloride. Large quantities of potassium chloride guarantee cardiac arrest. Until recently, the Chapman protocol was standard US practice in carrying out the death penalty.

However, as the international campaign to eradicate death penalty gains momentum, the use of lethal injection has become a topic of acrimonious debate. Lately, several manufacturers

of these anaesthetics made it impossible for the prison authorities to buy these drugs for administering lethal doses. So prison doctors figured that if they used one strong anesthetic agent such as propofol (which incidentally Michael Jackson overdosed on) they could bypass this problem. But manufacturers of propofol have also objected to its usage for this purpose. The saga continues.

The good news for Americans is that federal courts are handing down fewer death sentences (313 in 1994 vs 78 in 2012). The reasons are multifarious. Murder rates have plummeted. Eyewitness accounts, which formed the basis of many of these convictions, have now been found to be increasingly unreliable. It appears even rape victims commonly identify the wrong person. Memory is a poor guide. Finally, American jurors have occasionally sentenced the wrong man as proven by subsequent DNA testing leading present-day jurors to be very cautious in handing out death sentences.

Even as the debate on the ethics and utility of capital punishment rages on, more contemporary, humane ways of execution are being sought after. 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

A musical box

Not one to be outdone by its contemporaries, Japanese electronics manufacturer Toshiba has released a new series of televisions that aims to please both the eyes and the ears.

Stylishly designed and packed with a ton of fascinating features, the new P2300 series comes reasonably priced too. Starting at Rs 34,000 for the 24-inch model, the price more than doubles for its top of the line, the 39-inch beauty that sells for Rs 79,000. Considering the overall package that the reputed Japanese manufacturer offers, you don't mind forking out the extra thousands.

With their thin frame and beautiful sleek-black and silver finish, this range of televisions will undoubtedly attract the more design-conscious customers. But the new machines have more to it than just their good looks. The P2300 Series' REGZA Engines' advanced 10-bit video processing technology and 100Hz screen refresh rate ensure top-notch video quality. The auto signal and contrast boosters, auto clean and intelligent audio view features reinforce this even more, making the television series one of the best ones available in the market today.

This is especially true for the series' 39-inch sets that churn out videos at a high-definition resolution of 1366 x 768 pixels perfect for presentations, gaming and binge watching movies and series.

As HDTVs have gotten progressively thinner over time, manufacturers have been challenged to fit in speaker drivers. As a result, many slim televisions are incapable of producing good quality sound that hampers the overall viewing experience. However, Toshiba has taken this into consideration, and included dedicated

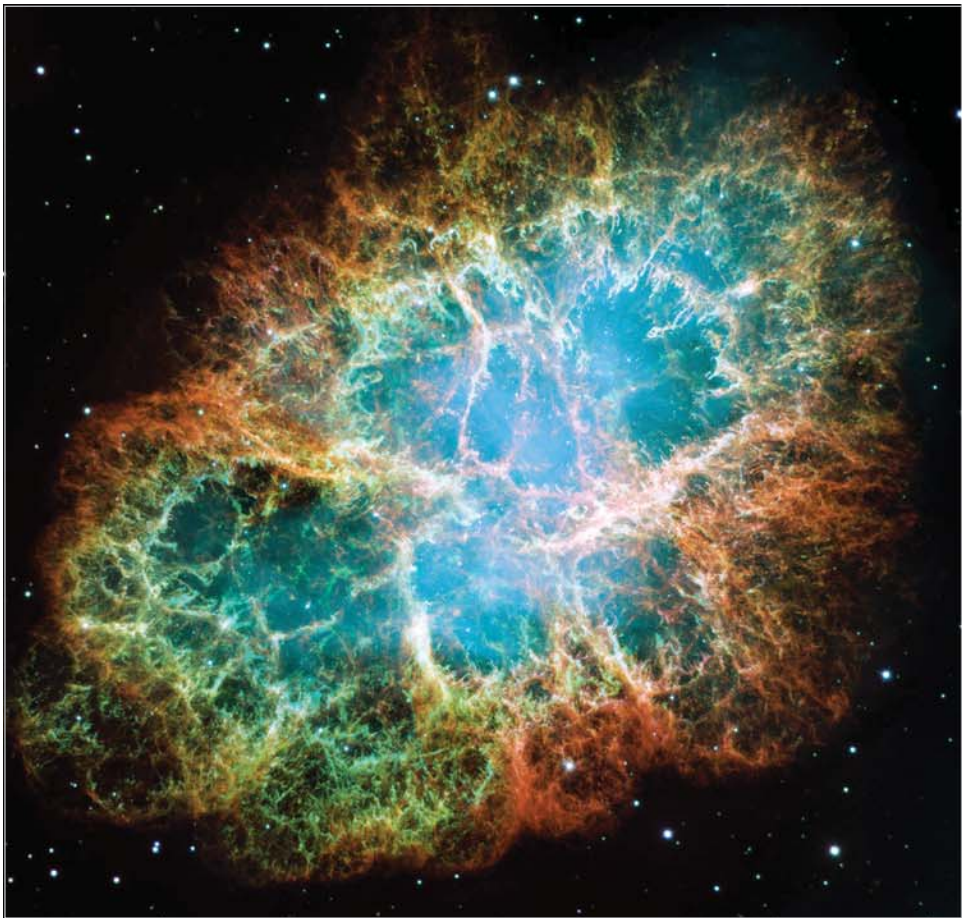


sound bars in the P2300 televisions. Coupled with the 20W power bass booster-enabled speakers, the dynamic and crisp sound from the televisions complement the crystal-clear images perfectly.

Toshiba has also made the P2300 televisions device-friendly with a host of connectivity options that support TV, DTH, DVD/Blu-Ray, PC, gaming or USB. What is most impressive is the on-board USB media player that supports a total of 28 video formats, including MP4 and MKV (which are popular here in Nepal). Conveniently, the USB port has sufficient power to support both thumb drives and external hard drives.

While there are many feature-packed, great-looking HDTVs out there in the market, ones with good sound quality are largely missing and this void is filled by the P2300 HDTVs. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's verdict: With a stylish design, brilliant display, connectivity options and good speakers at affordable price, Toshiba's P2300 series of HDTVs are more than capable of challenging the HDTV heavyweights in the market.



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NEXT STOP: HARYANA

Imagine an erudite, modern academician at the helm of a state infamous for its socio-political conservatism and venality

The political churning the Aam Aadmi Party has triggered in Indian politics has thrown up the delicious possibility of renowned political scientist Yogendra Yadav becoming the chief minister in India's northern state of Haryana. Though not formally announced, it is almost a certainty that Yadav will spearhead the AAP's campaign in Haryana during the general elections in April-May and assembly elections in October.



LOOK OUT

Ajaz Ashraf

Till now, Yadav has been combining the academician's eclecticism with the psephologist's certitude to articulate his party's ideas. But what has propelled him to emerge as arguably India's best political spokesperson is the democratic demeanour he sports in the public domain, willing to engage the AAP's harshest critics and implacable rivals in discussions. He does not equivocate when asked stinging questions, nor does he shy away from being barracked. And yet he always desists from the self-righteous shrillness that defines our public debates.

In the popular consciousness, Haryana has come to symbolise, rightly or wrongly, the very antithesis of what Yadav's persona represents: democratic ethos and a conscionable, albeit modern, approach to politics. The state has become the bedrock of reactionary social conservatism, earning notoriety for its caste panchayats issuing firmans (decrees) against same-gotra and inter-caste marriages, often ordering the social boycott of the defiant, at times even condemning them to death. Its female child ratio is the worst in the country. The Dalits in Haryana are oppressed and mauled with impunity.

Its politics mirrors the grim social reality. Haryana's contribution to India's political lexicon was the term 'aaya Ram gaya Ram', which aptly describes the culture of legislators willing to shift their loyalties to the highest bidder. Today, it has become a byword

for corrupt governance, a turf for realtors and politicians to combine in enriching themselves at the expense of the people, and a thriving site for a few political families to rule over generations.

Unlike Delhi, Haryana is susceptible to caste politics, which has as its driver the Jats, who comprise nearly 26 per cent of the state's population. Primarily agriculturists, they are entangled in social and agrarian tensions involving the lower castes, particularly the Dalits, who, significantly, constitute 19 per cent of the population, but are economically too weak to challenge the hegemony of Jats.

The social lay of Haryana consequently makes it tempting for a new entrant to take recourse to the politics of identity, in the hope of consolidating other castes against the Jats. But this route the AAP can take only at its peril. For one, it would invariably compromise the party's USP of not appealing to voters in caste and religious terms, significantly eroding its countrywide appeal and nixing its national ambition. Second, the AAP in Haryana can't unduly harp on caste conflict for mobilisation as Yadav's own caste is perceived to be landed and exploitative.

In the three weeks following the AAP's spectacular performance in Delhi, the party, under the aegis of Yadav, has been brainstorming to evolve a language to address social and political contradictions without slipping into the quagmire of identity politics. In the pursuit of this goal it will attempt to replicate its Delhi model in Haryana – of dovetailing specific concerns of Dalits and lower OBCs (other backward class) with the problems the poor and the marginalised encounter. Unlike other political parties, it won't shy away from opposing the panchayat-instigated killings, declaring that there is nothing called honour killing, that murder is murder.

The Aam Aadmi Party has chosen to focus on Haryana because the anti-corruption movement from the Anna Hazare days elicited a robust response here. For instance, the state supplied more than 2,000 volunteers for the AAP's Delhi election campaign, of which

around 200 made the capital city their home for weeks to end. It also happens to be the home state of party mascot, Arvind Kejriwal, as also Yadav, a fact likely to sway voters.

Lastly, innumerable land scams, particularly involving the Indian Congress President Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law, Robert Vadra, would give the AAP's anti-corruption plank a sharp edge. It also makes immense psephological sense for Yadav to focus on Haryana.

With five political parties in the fray, the threshold of vote-share required to govern gets lowered to around 25 per cent. It's a situation advantageous for a debutant.

Yadav's demeanour will come to tellingly symbolise the AAP's strategy. His rooting for a new type of politics – interest vs identity – will have credence because he won't be viewed as a typical politician mouthing trite slogans. After all, he has risen to national prominence outside

MY TURN: Political scientist Yogendra Yadav (right) is likely to head the Aam Aadmi Party's campaign in Haryana during the general elections of April-May.

the bounds of politics, in the world of academia, thus making it easy for the AAP to project his entrance into the electoral arena as a means to cleanse the polity of corruption and make the system more democratic and equitable. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com



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WHERE ARE THEY?

Families of the Uttarakhand flood victims live with the anguish of not knowing whether their loved ones are dead or alive

BACHCHU BK in KANCHANPUR



PTI



HINDUSTAN TIMES

After completing his SLC exams in April, 21-year-old Balram Dhungana like many young boys in his village of Mataiya, Kanchanpur, migrated to the neighbouring Indian state of Uttarakhand in search of a job. He could earn up to Rs 300 a day working around the Kedarnath Temple complex and his poor parents would have one less mouth to feed.

Once he got there, Balram found work at a hotel and called home to relay the news. The last time he spoke to them, he had promised to take his grandmother on pilgrimage next

year with his savings. Since that ill-fated 11 June afternoon, however, there has been no news of Balram.

The flash flood, caused by massive cloudbursts over western Nepal and Uttarakhand in mid-June last year, was the worst natural disaster in the region since the 2004 tsunami. Within moments, entire settlements, roads, and bridges were swept away, thousands were trapped in the wreckage and more than 5,000 locals, pilgrims, and migrant workers lost their lives.

According to an investigation

carried out by the Nepali embassy in Delhi and released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August, around 5,000 Nepalis were in Uttarakhand at the time of the floods. Of these, 3,900 were coolies, 158 hotel owners, the rest were shop-owners or on pilgrimage. The report lists 165 Nepalis to be 'missing'.

Indian government data puts the death toll at 58, among which 92 were Nepalis, and says 4,863 are missing. But experts working in Uttarakhand claim the figures are much higher. "Both countries don't want

to provide compensation, so they are making up numbers," explains R Shreedhar, a researcher who has been studying the plight of Nepali workers in Kedarnath since 1996.

Shreedhar says up to 10,000 Nepalis work menial jobs in the Char Dham circuit of the Garhwal Himalaya during peak season in July. According to his estimates, at least 5,000 Nepalis are missing. While authorities on both side of the border privately concede that the Nepali men are dead, their families in Kanchanpur are still

clinging on to hope.

When 14-year-old Suresh Chaudhary didn't turn up even months after the floods, his father Bishnu went from police station to government office all the way to the consulate in Delhi to find him. "I don't have any more photos of Suresh because I gave them all to the police hoping they would locate him," says the visibly distraught father.

Surat Khadka, 32, told his parents he was going to Kedarnath to earn money and look for a bride. Surat began working in Delhi and Mumbai since he was 15 and his family

History's currents

No one knows exactly how much loss Darchula had during the floods. Many houses are still dangling over the riverbank and yet more are being rebuilt in landslide prone areas. But cloudbursts aside, many other settlements and agricultural lands in Nepal are already sitting on ready-to-flow topsoil.

In the floods during 2013's monsoon, 112 people were killed and 9,962 people from 1,743 families were displaced. And in the last three decades, over 7000 people lost their lives to monsoon triggered floods and landslides.

The worst such calamity was in 1993 when floods in the Kulekhani reservoir area destroyed a power station and roads and bridges to the capital

INUNDATED: A private home in Darchula is swept away by the Mahakali River after pre-monsoon rainfall in June 2013 incited unprecedented floods and landslides in the region.



DISTRICT POLICE OFFICES/DARCHULA

were swept away and over 1,200 people were killed. Nine years later, a landslide in Matatirtha, on the south-western rim of the Valley itself, killed 13 people.

In 2008, the flooding Kosi river overran the barrage on the East-West

highway, displacing 70,000 people, isolating Eastern Nepal and pushing load-shedding to 18 hours a day after electricity transmission lines were also knocked over.

One and half years ago in Pokhara,

a landslide under the Macchapuchhre flushed through the Seti River and swept away picnickers and trekkers. Only 20km downstream from Kharapani, which was hit the hardest, lies the tourist hub of Pokhara, itself spread on the site of a five-hundred-year-old flood site.

From 1971 to 2009, as many as 55 municipalities across the country were inundated. Among these, the towns that lay in the hilly regions of Nepal were just as prone to landslides as floods due to bank encroachment and mismanagement of embankments, while settlements in the Tarai suffered from a lack of infrastructure to drain floodwater.

And as the swollen rivers ate away river banks metre by metre, agricultural land, homes, roads, and bridges followed suit. Towns like Butwal, Putalibajar, Hetauda, Kamalamai, Panauti, Waling, Narayan, Khandbari, Prithvinarayan and Kathmandu, some of which house administrative offices of their districts, are among the most prone to loss of life and property to monsoon-time calamities.

Bachchu BK



LOST AND NEVER FOUND: (clockwise from far left): The Kedarnath Temple in the foreground after the floods; a pilgrim pleads with a soldier to be airlifted out of the danger zone; Suresh Chaudhary's mother, Surat Khadka's parents, and Balram Dhungana's parents still hold on to the hope of seeing their sons again.



was keen to see him marry and settle down.

Seven months have passed since the tragic event, yet there is no trace of their son. The Khadkas called friends and relatives in Uttarakhand to find out if anyone had seen him, but to no avail. Surat's father has taken refuge in alcohol to cope with the loss.

Besides the embassy's report, there has been no serious attempt by the Nepali government to find out the whereabouts and status of its citizens. Even the few private search operations remain stuck in bureaucratic red tape.

"Indian officials first told us to bring referral letters from the Nepali government. Once we got the necessary documents, we went to Banbasa in Uttarakhand. From there we were sent to district headquarters in Champawat. The administrators there suggested we meet Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna in Rudraprayag district," recounts Gopal Gurung, who led a search party to find missing Nepalis. "After a long wait, we finally managed to talk to the CM and he helped us gain access into the flood-hit areas."

Since the team couldn't

find anything substantial, they went to see Bahuguna again, but weren't as lucky the second time around. As the two governments continue to conveniently push campaigners like Gurung into a bureaucratic maze, hundreds of families in this far-western Tarai district live with the anguish of not knowing whether their loved ones are dead or alive.

nepalitimes.com

Manmade disasters, #662
No need to panic, #662
Fatalism and disasters, #664



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Sujit Mahat, *Kantipur*, 29 December

क्रान्तिपुर

The swearing-in ceremony of Aam Admi Party Chariman Arvind Kejriwal as the chief minister of Delhi at the Ramleela maidan last week, was a watershed moment in Indian history. A party that was established a mere 13 months before polls, managed to topple the country’s grand old party that had won three state elections in a row.

But the downfall of the Indian National Congress began in 2010 after the corruption scandal surrounding the Commonwealth Games. The AAP took this opportunity to rally opinion against institutionalised graft in the public service sector. But what truly turned the tide in favour of Kejriwal and his team was their commitment to financial transparency. AAP said it would accept donations from Indians as well as NRIs and then publish the accounts online. It even promised to return money obtained through illegal means. When a businessman in Birganj tried to donate to the AAP, he was told that they did not accept donations from foreigners.

This change of guard in Indian politics has, unsurprisingly, spawned a ripple effect across the border and politicians and analysts are busy pondering over the consequences. Ram Sharan Mahat from the Nepali Congress took to social media and tweeted: “Political parties are like relics and the public is frustrated with state services. It is easy to stage protests, but the future of AAP will be decided by what it does when it is in power.” Fellow NC leader

and CA member Gagan Thapa believes that the very people who took to the streets to overthrow the monarchy in 2006, propelled the Maoists into power and then voted them out this year, will come out once again to transform the country’s politics in a similar manner as AAP cadre. “I knew the citizens of Delhi would support the AAP because they knew that all the older parties in India were the same,” says Thapa.

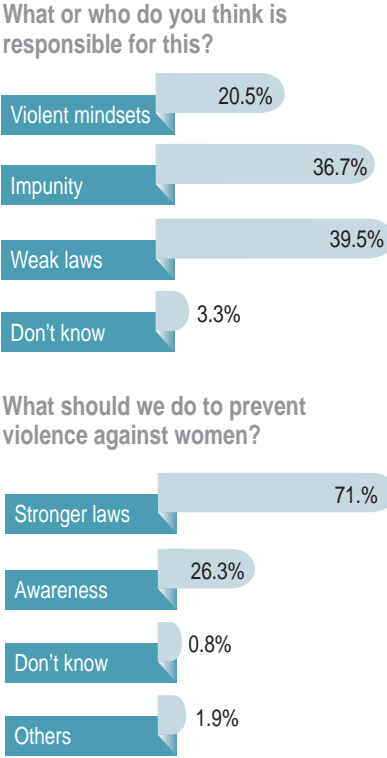
UML leader Ghanshyam Bhusal also thinks that Nepalis will start looking for alternatives if the major parties don’t mend their ways and draft a constitution within a year. And Rameswor Khanal, former government secretary, suggests urban-based parties in Nepal to follow the modus-operandi set by the AAP.

However, sociologist Chaitanya Mishra asserts that it is too early for an AAP-style party to gain ascendancy in Nepal because the main issue here is the prolonged political transition and not corruption: “Maybe once the politics is back on track, we may see the rise of such a party.” Mishra says further that the leadership for a party like AAP is as important as the issues it raises. AAP rode the wave created by Anna Hazare’s campaign against corruption. Kejriwal was a tax official by profession before switching to social service and winning the Magsaysay Award.

The group Bibeksheel Nepali, came closest to being an AAP-style party during Nepal’s CA elections. However, Bibeksheel’s weak organisation and limited appeal even among Kathmandu’s urban masses meant that it could not garner the same support and recognition and Kejriwal and his party.

Weekly bazar poll

In weekly polls conducted with the support of The Asia Foundation, Himal Khabarpatrika asks 376 respondents in 11 cities across Nepal every Monday for their opinion on contemporary issues. This week’s question was on violence against women.



Three things

Baburam Bhattarai, *Facebook*, 6 January

facebook

Every time I talk about the state of democracy in Nepal and within the Maoist party, reports begin circulating in the media which imply that I raise these issues for personal interest. First of all I would like to say these 'reports' are not only slanderous, but based on rumours and hearsay.

Second, at this point the national discourse should be centred solely on institutionalising democratic values and the rule of law and ensuring that they are properly enforced. This is not the time to be thinking about individual gains or running after lucrative posts. Let everyone recall that I have been talking about restructuring our party and developing a new, relevant kind of democracy for a long, long time.

Third, whenever there are important political and ideological discussions, status-quoist elements in our society try to derail the discourse and start hatching various conspiracy theories. Therefore I request everyone, including the press, not to take part in such unprincipled, apolitical, and immoral activities and instead help promote a healthy political debate so that we can cultivate a democratic culture in our country.

Time to make the call

Editorial, *Kantipur*, 9 January

क्रान्तिपुर

It is appalling that the Constituent Assembly has not held its first meeting fifty days after the elections. Just as the rows over proportional representation candidates settled, parties now can't decide who, among the president and the head of the government, is supposed to summon the lawmakers to work.

The debate over who should call the first CA meeting is a meaningless exercise, but now the difference of interpretation has taken a legal turn for the worse. Two opposing writ petitions were filed at the Supreme Court for and against President Ram Baran Yadav and Interim Election Council Chairman Khil Raj Regmi's 'rights'.

The Supreme Court's decision this week to seek help of 'amicus curiae' (friends of the court) to foster debate on the matter, instead of swiftly issuing an order, has added further uncertainty.

But it doesn't mean that the CA cannot convene without the court's decision. After all the SC hasn't



issued any interim order to put entire proceedings of the CA on hold. And according to a clearly stated provision in the Interim Constitution, it is Chairman Regmi's duty to initiate the second CA.

As far as President Ram Baran Yadav's request to amend the constitution to allow him to convene the meeting is concerned, it is for parties to decide whether or not they are in

favour of this. If the two major parties Congress and UML cannot agree, it would be best to go back to the letter of the law. But, to end the deadlock, President Yadav himself needs to pass an ordinance the government sent him about the swearing in of the newly elected CA members.

After four wasted years of the first CA, it seems the second CA will have a disappointing and much delayed start. The political bickering in the last fifty days has given out a negative message to the people who turned up with so much hope on election day. It is unfortunate that our politicians have taken the growing cynicism lightly and not done more to find solutions quicker.

The parties can do this by making sure the CA takes a formal shape as quickly as possible. After that they should expedite constitution-writing, which they promised to finish within a year of the polls. And as the head of the largest party, it is Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala's job to form a government to bring the country back on its wheels.



Logs: Party conflicts

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 9 January

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“The current president is a caretaker president like Baburam Bhattarai’s post-CA government.”

UML leader Bamdev Gautam, *Janadharana*, 9 January

20 YEARS AND COUNTING



Bhojraj Bhat, Nepal, 5 January

नेपाल

This is not the first time Baburam Bhattarai has hurled barbs at party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The feud between the top comrades has been ongoing for the past 20 years. Here is a sample:

1 A year before the insurgency started, in 1995, Bhattarai was stripped off the presidency of Samyukta Janamorchha. The party reasoned that it would be hard for Bhattarai to go underground if he got too comfortable with his post. But the real reason behind the demotion was because Dahal was jealous of his comrade's growing popularity among rank and file. Four months later, he was forced to backtrack on this decision. This was the first time Dahal realised Bhattarai was eyeing party leadership.

2 Dahal's faction have always claimed that they prepared the blueprint for guerrilla warfare, long before several parties united to form the CPN-Maoist. Bhattarai, on the other hand, has maintained that the party decided to opt for war only after he joined the ranks. Dahal wanted to begin the insurgency from Rukum-Rolpa, while Bhattarai was keen to strike in Gorkha because it was birthplace of the Shah dynasty and

his home district. In the end, the party decided to begin hostilities from Rukum, Rolpa, Gorkha, and Sindhuli.

3 Soon afterwards, Bhattarai became the poster boy of the 'people's war' in Nepal's mainstream media. At the party's fourth extensive meeting in Faridabad, India in 1999, it was proposed that the general secretary's personality be projected into the public sphere. Initially, Bhattarai compared this move to Stalinist Soviet Union, but later broke down in front of everyone and admitted he had made a mistake. This was the only time Bhattarai cried in public. He then went onto publish a veiled attack on Dahal in an essay titled *Let us learn from Marx*. At a meeting a year later, Bhattarai was labelled an anarchist for spilling party secrets.

4 Dahal loyalists wanted to call their undertaking the 'Prachanda Thought' because they believed the armed struggle in Nepal was very unique in the history of communism. But Bhattarai said that it was too early for such labels. A compromise was reached and both sides settled on the name 'Prachanda path' at the party's second national assembly in Bhatinda, Punjab in 2001.

5 In August 2004, during a Maoist central committee meeting at Phuntibang, Rolpa, Dahal proposed to centralise the party structure and the PLA to prepare for a counter-attack against state forces. Bhattarai disagreed and walked off from the meeting. An hour later, the two leaders talked alone and came to an understanding: all decisions were off for the time being.

6 Only two months after Phuntibang, the Maoists brought out a report called *14 instances of opportunism within the party* and the Dahal faction told lower ranking cadre that Jit Bir (Bhattarai's nom de guerre) was the most opportunistic. Four months later, it was decided that

Bhattarai had acted against the spirit of communist revolution and he along with his wife and another supporter were punished.

7 At the historic meeting of September-October 2005 in Chunbang, Rolpa when the Maoists decided to join the peace process, Bhattarai sacrificed all efforts to make the party more democratic and submitted all authority to Dahal.

8 After the Maoist party's landslide victory in the 2008 elections, Bhattarai wanted to become prime minister, but received little support from his comrades. Ultimately, Dahal got to lead the government. The Maoist chairman, however, had to resign in May 2009 after his unsuccessful attempt to oust the chief of Nepal Army. Dahal accused India of conspiring against him because it wanted to see the JNU graduate as PM. Naturally, Bhattarai was incensed and Dahal had no other option than to support his deputy to get himself out of the mess.

9 As negotiations for the next PM were underway, Bhattarai, Mohan Baidya, and Narayan Kaji Shrestha met at a private gathering and criticised Dahal's approach. Soon after, the chairman called for a meeting at Palungtar and decided the party should head back to the jungle as Baidya proposed. Bhattarai submitted a note of dissent and four months later, Dahal backtracked on his decision.

10 In April 2011, Dahal gave the impression of supporting Bhattarai and even proposed that his deputy take on the reigns of Singha Darbar. Bhattarai finally became PM in August that year and it seemed like the two would finally let bygones be bygones. Even as Baidya



RABINDRAMANANDHAR

and Co protested every decision taken by the Bhattarai government, Dahal stood by his side.

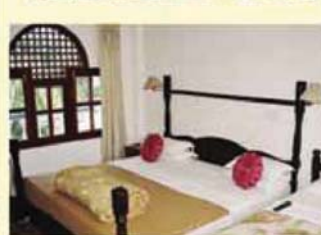
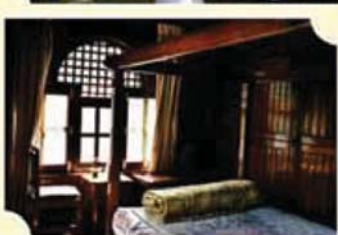
11 Once the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in May 2012, however, cracks began to reappear. Bhattarai blamed Dahal for the failure of the CA and censured him in public. The breakup in the Maoist party later that year, forced the two warring heads to stick together.

12 At the party's general convention in Hetauda in February 2013, both Dahal and Bhattarai proposed a party-less government led by the chief justice. Bhattarai then resigned from his post as deputy chairman hoping Dahal would follow suit. Instead, the chairman stripped all senior leaders of their titles.

13 As the results of the November election began trickling in, the Maoists, sensing a humiliating defeat, cried foul and threatened to boycott parliament. A few days later, Bhattarai declared via Facebook that the party would accept the new mandate and insisted that the chairman follow democratic norms. The two comrades are once again at loggerheads, after Dahal filled the party's PR list with his supporters and yes-men. In recent days, Bhattarai has regularly taken to social media to vent out his frustrations and rumours are swirling of yet another split.

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News we can use in 2014

As you may have noticed, 2014 is off to a flying start with the news item that Nepal is to host an International Conference of Laughter this year. This is appropriate, since Kathmandu is already the seat of the SAARCASM Secretariat and has won the bid to host the headquarters of the International Training Centre for Humour (ITCH), by beating other promising rival candidates such as Pyongyang and Yangon.

Further details are awaited. But if true, what this means is that besides being known as the birthplace of the Buddha, the Land of Everest, and the hartal capital of the Eastern Hemisphere, Kathmandu is going to be turned into a seriously funny place. About time, too, since things were starting to get a bit out of hand around here.

According to well-placed sources quoted by RSS, the Nepal Chapter of Humorous International will work closely with the Nepal Tourism Bored to promote humour tourism and to kick this off it has already declared 2014 'Amusing Nepal Year'.

The Chairman of the Amusing Nepal Organising Main Committee told newsmen at a solemn press conference: "It is of great national pride for Nepal to be chosen as the venue for this conference. You there near the window, what's so funny? This is no laughing matter, we are taking this development very seriously indeed. We will not allow our country to be made a laughing-stock."

Besides the plenary, the convention will have several working groups

to deliberate on issues like 'Good Governance and Good Humour', 'The Role of Court Jesters in Post-Conflict Reconciliation', and 'Is Democracy a Bad Joke?'



And in other news:

HELMETS MANDATORY FOR PEDESTRIANS

The Kathmandu Valley Traffic Police Office has announced that helmets and protective suits will be mandatory for all pedestrians in the capital from January 2014.

Citing the increasing number of speeding Kathmanduites who collide with parked vehicles everyday, commuters who get sideswiped by motorcyclists on zebra crossings, vendors in Asan who get gored every so often by bulls, and those who fall into potholes while attending to calls of nature, the police has decided that pedestrians will be required to wear protective gear while going about their daily business.

"It is our duty to make it safe for people to walk on the streets," said the head of the police's new Safety First and Last Task Force. "We will not rest easy until every life and limb of every street walker in Kathmandu is accounted for."

The mandatory gear that every Kathmanduite will be required to wear while walking on the streets will include a Grade 50 Thermex Crash Helmet with Neck Brace and Visor, industrial strength facial mask with a 1,000 litre oxygen cylinder to brave the dusty widening roads, elbow and knee guards, teflon-coated shin pads, crampons, carabiners,

and jummar rope to rappel out of potholes.

TREKKER PROTECTION IN 2014

The Nepal government has decided to make it mandatory for trekkers to wear radio collars to track their movement by satellite, effective immediately. The TAAN authoritarians will be able to monitor the exact position of all trekkers in Nepal in real time on a giant GPS screen at its headquarters in Kathmandu. "We are hopeful that this will mean every hiker can be tracked to see if they sneak into restricted areas without paying fees," said a Tourism Official.

SMOKING BANNED

The government has decided to ban smoking in the Valley with immediately effect to protect the health of its citizens. The Supremo Court made the ruling after reviewing scientific evidence that walking for one hour on Kathmandu streets was the equivalent of smoking four packs of cigarettes. Inhalation of cigarette exhaust would exacerbate health hazards, the study concluded.

"We had to ban smoking on overhead bridges because it is impossible to control fumes from cars," the Justice said, "but our next step will be to ban breathing in all public places."

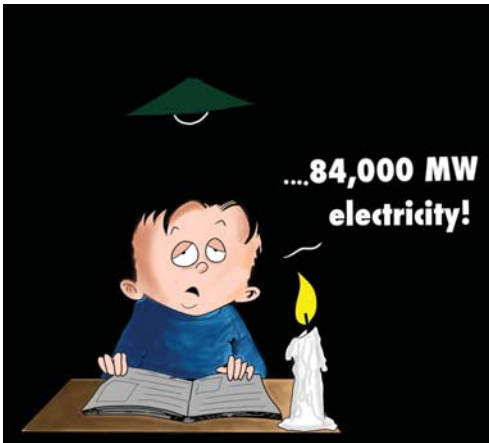
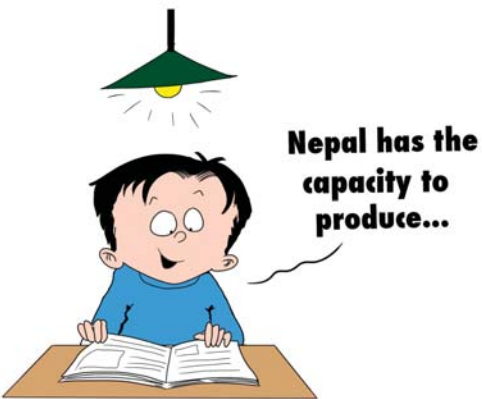
Research has shown that many Kathmandu residents can now hold their breath for up to half-an-hour at a stretch while walking along the Bagmati at Teku without any untoward side effects.

The Ass



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