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PAGE 10-11



SHARING SORROW TO EASE PAIN

BY JUANITA MALAGON

PAGE 16-17

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IN CIRCLES: A woman grinds maize seeds at a water mill in Khultar, Makwanpur district on Monday.

DEVAKI BISTA

WHEEL IN MOTION

Now that the Constituent Assembly's speaker formally asked the parties to elect a prime minister on 10 February, we will tick off one more target that the November elections set out to achieve. Of the potential hopefuls, Nepali Congress president and parliamentary party leader Sushil Koirala is the only one to

file candidacy. The NC started negotiations with the 30 parties inside the CA and half of them have agreed in principle to a Congress-led government.

On Tuesday, the UML also voted KP Oli as its parliamentary party leader. While his victory marks a visible change within the party ranks, it could invite future

conflicts with Chairman Jhal Nath Khanal and his faction. Already Oli has asked the NC to come up with a proposal for power sharing or heed to the UML's demands.

Although the parties' main task is to write a constitution, there are other matters that warrant attention. A recent survey placed Nepal at the bottom of heap in the world and South Asian rankings on the freedom to do business. The report highlights endemic corruption in governance,

judiciary, and police as the reasons behind our poor ranking. Most of our economic challenges are a direct result of our own incompetence and we need to address them now.

Justice for war crimes will also play an important role during power-sharing discussions in the voting of a new prime minister next week. But conflict victims are worried that like previous governments, the new one too will try to sweep conflict-era atrocities under the carpet. 🇳🇵

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DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD

It is an indication of how little emphasis Nepal's powers-that-be give to the economy and business that the recent news of the country dropping to the bottom of the world and South Asian rankings on the freedom to do business created hardly a ripple.

The Wall Street Journal and Heritage Foundation survey showed Nepal dropping eight points to rank 149 of 178 in the world for ease of doing business. If it's any consolation, Bangladesh (131) and India (120) don't fare much better, although Sri Lanka is way ahead at rank 90. But even among South Asian countries, Nepal is at the bottom of the heap.

The score is based on six criteria that include transparency, labour, investment laws, and governance. Needless to say, the report highlights endemic corruption in government, the judiciary, police, and the prevalence of organised crime in Nepal as the reasons behind the poor ranking.

Coinciding with the report, Kathmandu recently hosted a conference organised by the Brussels-based World Forum for Ethics in Business and which was addressed by Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Khil Raj Regmi. The fact that the interim prime minister, was still in office and giving speeches nearly three months after elections was itself a telling sign of the political paralysis that is at the root of the country's economic stagnation.

Nepalis have become so blasé and tolerant of corruption that it seems almost futile to even conduct a seminar on the ethics of business. The private sector does not exist in a vacuum and most businesses admit that the external environment forces them to indulge in behaviour they know is unethical in order to survive. Their justification is that they are not being immoral, just amoral.

Good ethics is good for business. Honesty pays. Integrity yields long-term benefits through the triple bottom line.



As FNCCI President Suraj Vaidya argued in a speech at the conference (*see overleaf*), Nepal's private sector needs to admit that it is a part of the problem. The greed has now transcended just plain dishonesty: 518 private businesses owe Rs 6.19 billion in unpaid taxes, three bank CEOs are under investigation for embezzlement, an insurance company has been taken over for fraud, and several tycoons are in self-imposed exile to avoid arrest.

In such a situation, it may seem almost comical to talk about enforcing ethical behaviour in business and

politics. However, part of the problem is that the media only highlights the crooks and headlines scandals. The honest cop, the public servants with integrity, the upright politicians do not make it to the news. Rather than individuals being corrupt, the prolonged political transition has meant that graft is now systematised. The solution therefore is not so much to go after individuals, but to address the in-built reasons that have made corruption so accepted. There is empirical evidence to show that good ethics is actually good for business. Honesty pays. Integrity yields long-term benefits through the triple bottom line.

The cycle of corruption starts with election financing, where candidates turn to willing businesses to fund their campaigns. The candidate has to return the favour when he is in office. Electoral reform and state-funding of political parties must be a part of the new election rules being drawn up in the constitution. This is our last chance to eliminate one of the most important reasons for systematic corruption.

The others are to reduce the size of government and the bureaucracy, pay them better, and undertake high-profile investigations against the Big Fish. The anti-corruption watchdog should not be an agency for political witch-hunts which it is presently, but be given teeth to go after crooks big or small.

If you clean up politics, you will clean up business. And the most effective way to clean up politics is to force elected politicians from the prime minister right down to the VDC chairman to become more accountable through clean elections. The last election, the new constitution, and local elections, hopefully this year, will in large measure take us in that direction.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

TWO NATIONS

Yes Sri Lanka has made immense economic progress since the end of the civil war in 2009, but the editorial completely overlooks how unequally this growth is distributed among the country's multi-ethnic, multi-religious population ('A tale of two nations', #692). It's the Sinhala-Buddhist majority who has benefited the most from the peace dividend. Mahinda Rajapaksa and his men are pushing the Tamils, Muslims, and other minority groups further into economic and political obscurity.

Kanchan

- This piece sounds a bit like justification for a genocidal fascist regime by a country which has made a mess of democracy. Don't blame democracy, blame yourselves.

Vellu

- This is a very good comparison between two states within the same geographic region, with similar cultural backgrounds, and 'some' similar recent historical backgrounds. Yet the two nations are diverging remarkably in their development. Why? Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson in their book *Why Nations Fail*, say the political environments of countries are either inclusive or extractive. Singapore, South Korea, Japan, to name just a few, have all developed because of their inclusive environments.

Nepal, on the other hand, has an extractive political environment

where the ruling elites, government, and lawmakers are all trying to extract as much as they can for themselves instead of creating wealth and opportunity for others. This has an external knock on effect. For example, China knows that putting x billion dollars into a project in Nepal results in a hefty extraction before the job is completed and as a result it is reluctant to invest. Internally, there is an environment which is anti-investment, anti-creativity, anti-entrepreneurship, anti-self education, because everyone knows that government offices, politicians, officers etc are all trying to extract bribes and windfalls.

Flexible

- In Sri Lanka, one president has been ruling since 2005. In Nepal seven to eight governments have changed in the same period and CA-I met its unceremonious demise after four years. Giving every individual the opportunity to rule, now that is real democracy and no other country does it as well as we do.

Ajay

- Both Nepal and Sri-Lanka are by far my favourite holiday destinations in Asia, but whenever I visit, I feel a lingering sense of sadness. On the one hand, I absolutely admire the hard working and kind people and stunning geography of the two countries. On the other hand, the brutal legacy of war that casts a dark shadow on these otherwise magnificent nations troubles me.

Jane Stadum

- Nepal and Sri Lanka have a

common denominator: India. Because of the big brother's intrusion and bullying, tens of thousands of Sri Lankans were murdered. Similarly, India used Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai as pawns and bloodied its filthy hands with the lives of 17,000 Nepalis.

Narayana Prasad

SQUARE ZERO

I have never understood Kamal Thapa's brand of politics; sometimes I wonder if the man really believes in what comes out of his mouth ('Back to square zero', Trishna Rana, #692). Yes, I agree that there wasn't as much debate in 2008 when the assembly declared Nepal to be a secular, democratic republic as there should have been. However, we have spent almost six years under the 'secular' label and I think there is no need to regress or waste time on something that has long gone. Besides, for all practical purposes we are still a 'Hindu' nation in the sense that our government and day-to-day life are still heavily influenced by Hindu traditions and values. And clearly there hasn't been much done to bring religious minorities into the national mainstream. So for the sake of harmony and progress, Thapa and Co need to grind their teeth and let go of the past.

Amrita Singh

- Thank you Trishna for pointing out that the constitution is not the end point and we are so far away from the finish line that it terrifies me. Kenya completed drafting its constitution

almost two decades after it began the process and we are proudly following in our African cousin's footsteps, shame on us.

J Khadka

- Our dear leaders started deliberating over a new constitution when I was still in college. The way they are moving forward (or rather backwards), the document won't be ready even after my children are born. Perhaps my grandchildren will live to see it.

Note

- Not happy with being on square zero, politicians like Thapa want to take us back to square minus 100. They should just accept the agreements of the previous CA and move forward. We destroyed a decade in a needless civil war and are on the path to wasting another 10 years on a document that most Nepalis have grown disillusioned about.

Lal

- The argument of whether or not to accept the achievements of the precious CA is actually pretty stupid. The new CA has a fresh mandate and to impose the rulings of the last CA without its consent will be undemocratic, insulting, and morally wrong. Let this go to a CA vote. The writer suggesting that we should do something wrong, undemocratic, or immoral just because doing the right thing will take longer, is absolutely ridiculous.

B

- Abolishing the monarchy six years ago has turned out to be the biggest travesty for Nepal. This is why I support Thapa and his ideologies. If there is anyone who can save this cursed country, it is the king. Jai desh, jai naresh.

Babu

10 YEARS, 100 COUNTRIES

While cyclist Furtemba Sherpa's world tour to spread the message of peace and harmony is highly commendable, I'm particularly impressed by his efforts to build bike tracks around the Valley ('10 years, 100 countries', Ngima Pakhrin, #692). Kathmandu has become so congested that it is no longer safe to travel around in cars, let alone in motorbikes and bicycles. Hopefully, if the plan to build cycle lanes is a success, people will feel more secure on the streets and hop on the two-wheelers.

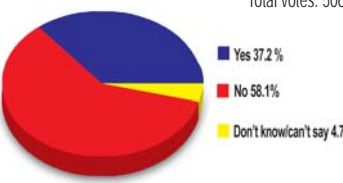
Cecelia Pandey



nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #693

Q. Should the new assembly adopt the agreements made by CA-1?



Weekly Internet Poll # 694. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the best way to kill time during load-shedding?





BIKRAM RAI

Cleaning up our act

The time has come for Nepal's private sector to rise above the profit-only model of doing business

Business is based on the foundation of social systems. Economic interactions in a society reflect its cultural substrate and are shaped by it. So, if a society has weak ethical values and corruption is the norm, it reflects in the economic domain and vice-versa.

Business also has to work within a legal environment, yet the private sector often takes illegal shortcuts because of its ambition to maximise profit in the minimum time. Recent scandals in Nepal involving CEOs of banks being investigated for irregularities, the Insurance Board having to take over a company, or the Rs 10 billion pending in the Appellate Court under banking crime and fraud have tarnished the image of the country's private sector.

Among the factors that have fostered corruption and malfeasance, the first is that the income of even senior government officials is too low for them to maintain a decent living standard.

The prime minister's gross salary is Rs 56,200, a minister earns Rs 44,330 a month, a secretary in the bureaucracy takes home Rs 37,390. Then there are the frequent changes in government. In my three year tenure as president of FNCCI, I have worked with three heads of governments and by the time I leave office, will probably see a fourth. Nepal's inability to harness its enormous hydropower resources and the 8-16 hours of power cuts a day because of erratic policy is one of the results of this fluidity.

The web of corruption that tangles government and the private sector begins with election campaign financing. The November 2013 election cost Rs 60 billion, candidates for the CA easily spent Rs 20 million each, and all of that money came from businesses who will want to extract their pound of flesh after elections.

It is all about the demand and supply of money. The ambition of politicians creates the demand for money and the private sector provides the supply. The bureaucracy is the go-between to facilitate this transaction. This nexus is the fundamental issue to be addressed when tackling corruption.

Singapore fought corruption on all these fronts: it raised government salaries, instituted quick investigations and convictions of those accused, and the social stigma was so unbearable that one public servant committed suicide.

In Nepal, the time has come for the private sector to rise above the profit-only model of doing business. Social entrepreneurship, a strong public service orientation of the private sector, self-adopted environmental and social goals for businesses have to be the norm in the coming years. We understand that merely following the law is not enough, we have to be proactive in enabling ethical business practices.

The writing of the constitution is an opportune moment to address the vicious cycle of the demand-supply intermediary for campaign funding reforms. Moving forward, there are three steps Nepal can take right away to clean up its act:

1. Electoral funding reform. Provision to be included in new constitution for a financial mechanism whereby the government provides political parties with the resources to conduct their electoral campaigns.
2. Smaller, smarter government. The government of the day stops being an employment agency and cuts the size of the cabinet and the bureaucracy. Downsizing staff and using the savings to up the salaries of existing officials will improve efficiency and clean up government.
3. The private sector must admit there is a problem. Nobody is above the law and the captains of the industry have to walk the talk no matter how big they are.

www.wfeb.org

Suraj Vaidya is the president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and this op-ed is adapted from his keynote address to the conference on Business Ethics for a Prosperous Nepal organised by the World Forum for Ethics in Business in Kathmandu last month.



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“Nepal very attractive market for Ncell”

Johan Dennelind is the CEO of TeliaSonera, the Swedish-Finnish parent company of Ncell in Nepal. Dennilind is visiting Kathmandu next week and spoke to *Nepali Times* on telecom trends, privacy and transparency issues.

Nepali Times: It has been five years since Ncell entered the Nepal market. How have international telecom trends changed in that period?

Johan Dennelind: The desire for connectivity has grown dramatically. People increasingly want to be connected anytime and everywhere, even on top of Mt Everest. We have also witnessed drastic growth in mobile data usage, owing mainly to growth of social networks and availability of online video content, as well as machine-to-machine applications.

Industry landscape is changing from voice to data, including voice over IP (applications like Skype, Viber, etc). Mobile has firmly established itself as an indispensable part of our lives. Mobile navigation, ticketing and check-in, payments, medicine, and even mobile voting in elections have become a daily reality during the past few years.

In order to meet the demand for capacity, mobile operators strengthen their networks with new technologies like 4G and even starting to talk about 5G. TeliaSonera was the first in the world to launch 4G in the capitals of Sweden and Norway in 2009. Today, we offer 4G services in all Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as in two countries in the Eurasian region – Azerbaijan and Moldova. Our 4G coverage in Estonia, one of the Baltic Sea countries, has been named the best in Europe.

And how are these changes going to affect TeliaSonera's operations in other parts of Asia in general and Nepal in particular?

The key focus for all market players today is to secure the right opportunities for future growth. Therefore it is important for us to continue investing in infrastructure, in backbone, access network, applications, and of course in customer service. Providing more and smarter opportunities for communication makes us more attractive to the customer, while customer service excellence is going to be a major

competitive advantage. These will be high focus areas for us in the coming years.

We also have to be increasingly cost conscious and improve the efficiency of our products and processes, in order to stay competitive. This is one of the reasons we invest in solar energy in Nepal to increase energy efficiency of our network.

The complaint from many users in Nepal is that although the price of hardware has come down steadily, the data plans are still too expensive and bandwidth not satisfactory for smartphones.

There is a major difference between hardware and mobile communication service. While producers are able to make their mobile devices smaller, thinner, and more efficient and their production process leaner, we operators have to expand our data pipes and increase capacity along with the growing consumer demand.

Investments in infrastructure are bigger in scale than hardware investments. This is especially true in Nepal where insufficiency of electricity requires that infrastructure companies like Ncell install back-up generators and deploy alternative energy solutions to generate the electricity they plan to use during load-shedding and to store it on their own battery banks.

However, the more users of our service, the cheaper it gets. In Eurasian region, including Nepal, our revenue per one gigabyte of data dropped by 30 per cent in 2013 compared to 2012, whereas data traffic in gigabytes has grown more than twice. This means prices are actually going down.

Share of smartphones in Ncell network has reached 15 per cent, which is still low compared to European countries. Nevertheless we firmly believe in high potential of mobile data in Nepal and Ncell will engage in talks with NTA regarding bandwidth and technology neutrality. Technologically, neutral licences allowing operators the most efficient use of the allocated and scarce frequency resources is the best way to boost competition and to deliver advanced services to users in rural areas where digital divide is very obvious today.

electronic ID card which allows them to perform all kinds of operations online, from birth registration to paying taxes and bills. Five years ago, Mobile ID was introduced, which enables secure authentication and digital signatures via mobile phone, eliminating the need for electronic ID-card reader and computer. People can sign documents, perform bank transactions, etc on the go, with their mobile phones.

Of course, the population of Estonia is 20 times smaller than that of Nepal, but big changes start with small steps. Development of rules and regulations for the telecom industry in a dialogue with industry players would greatly contribute to Nepal government's target of upgrading the country's status to Developing Country by 2022.

TeliaSonera has a very strict ethical code and a zero tolerance policy, yet the revelation in the Swedish media about your operations in Central Asia led to an investigation and the resignation of your predecessor. How has the company changed its internal procedures and policies?

TeliaSonera has adopted a comprehensive sustainability program, embracing areas like risk management, supplier ethics, customer privacy, anti-corruption, etc. We have tightened up decision-making and reporting procedures in our operations. Daily operations must have clear values and rules, this is key. We have an anti-corruption and privacy policies in place, most recently adopted policy on freedom of expression and we are training all our 27,000 employees worldwide on our Group Code of Ethics and Conduct, so that they can act with confidence and knowledge of our ethical principles in dubious situations.

Nepal has been ranked the least competitive in South Asia for foreign investors mainly because of the lack of transparency in governance. How does a company with such strict guidelines on business ethics function in a place like this?

Nepal is a very attractive market for us to be in and the benefits our services bring to people outweigh the risks. We have established strong mechanisms for risk mitigation and governance. It's a mutual journey for us and Nepal.

We cannot solve all bottlenecks on our own though, especially when it comes to such sensitive issues as privacy and freedom of expression. Therefore we have initiated the establishment of Industry Dialogue, with participation of major industry players, including equipment producers and service providers, to have a more efficient discussion between industry and governments on these issues.

What do you see as the main opportunities for growth and expansion of telecommunications in a country like Nepal?

As mobile penetration in Nepal has only reached 60 per cent, organic growth by adding more subscriptions is still an opportunity. Mobile data and new offers matching the customer needs are another.

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How does the growth of the Nepal telecom market compare with other countries where TeliaSonera has a presence?

Nepal has the lowest mobile penetration among the countries where TeliaSonera operates, therefore subscription and revenue growth rates are generally higher here. The lack of efficient regulation processes for the industries hinder this growth and entrance of new technologies to the market.

Let me again give you an example of Estonia, where having instant access to the internet has become a social right on its own, thanks to government's vision. The country's well-being is closely linked to development of ICT, which is reflected in one state body, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, overseeing both areas. As a result, Estonia is doing best in terms of economy out of the three Baltic Sea States, since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in early 1990's.

Government closely cooperates with the mobile companies working in the country, to increase its administrative efficiency through developing new mobile and electronic solutions. More than 90 per cent of Estonian citizens have an

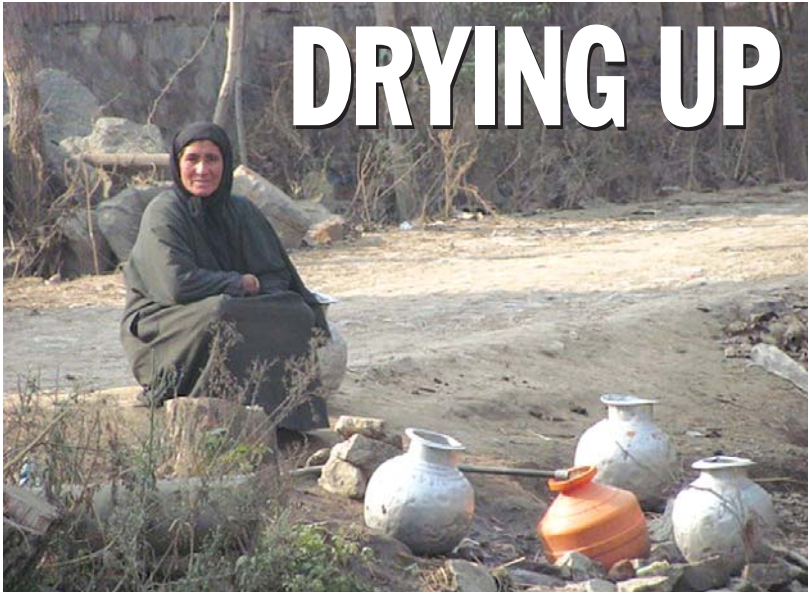
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Ncell sells, #546
Upwardly mobile, #583
"We are now building capacity", #583



ATHAR PARVAIZ

Zareena Bano has had to skip school 17 times this year to help out on her family's farm in Tangchekh, Kashmir of northern India. Her teachers say she has the potential to be a brilliant student, but warn that if she keeps missing school she will not go far.

Never before has the 15-year-old had to sacrifice her education in order to support her family. But an acute water crisis in this Himalayan state has made irrigation a constant worry and severely disrupted the way of life for thousands of farming families like her own.

"Sometimes, when water is in extremely short supply, we have to store water in small ponds that we dug ourselves and plastic containers," says her father Gaffar Rathar. Troubled though he is by the toll the extra labour is taking on his daughter's schoolwork, Rathar says he needs all the help he gets to work at his 2.5 acre paddy and walnut field.

Most residents of this lush valley are unaccustomed to drought. For generations, subsistence agriculturalists like Rathar have relied on steady rainfall and glacial rivers to irrigate their farmland.

But now the region is feeling the pinch of climate

Receding glaciers and decreasing rainfalls are hitting sustenance farmers hard in Kashmir

change. The most recent State of the Environment Report (SOER), released by the Directorate of Ecology, Environment, and Remote Sensing in Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, says that all its monitoring stations across the state – except in Jammu, located in the plains 290km southeast from Srinagar – recorded a decrease in rainy days.

Jhelum, the largest river in the region, originates in South Kashmir and is fed by glaciers in the upper reaches near Pahalgam town. Jhelum's primary tributary, the Lidder, is fed by the Kolhai glacier, which is receding fast.

Quoting a study conducted by Kashmir University's geography department, Department Head Mohammad Sultan Bhat informs precipitation has decreased by 1.2cm in the lower regions and 8cm in higher altitudes since 1975.

According to figures in the most recent Kashmir Economic Survey, only 42 percent of

agricultural land in Kashmir is covered by irrigation facilities like canals and lift stations, while the remaining is entirely dependent on rainfall.

Following the enforcement of the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act in 1959, over 9,000 landowners were stripped of over 100,000 hectares of land, which was transferred to peasants. This created an agrarian-based economy in Kashmir, upon which 80 per cent of the population is dependent.

Three out of four Kashmiri farmers cultivate paddy and these are the ones likely to be hit the hardest. They earn an average of \$1,900 a year and produce up to 4000 kilos of paddy per hectare annually.

Earlier this year, scientists at Kashmir University had predicted increases in temperature and reduction in rainfall, and said rice production would decrease by 6.6 per cent in the next 25 years.

Already countless families are feeling the pinch of decreasing water supplies. Nasreena Begum, a mother of three children living in the village of Surigam in the northern Kupwara district, makes several treks a day to fetch water from a stagnant pond after the stream that once bordered her village has completely dried up.

In addition to drinking and washing water, she must also ensure that the family cow is properly watered, since her children rely heavily on the cow's milk for nourishment. The five litres of milk she sells earns valuable income and supplements her labourer husband's meagre earnings.

As the rains become thinner and the glacier-fed rivers slow to a trickle, she and many other farming families will be forced to hunker down to weather a hotter and drier Kashmir. ❏

www.ipsnews.net
Athar Parvaiz

EVEREST BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Natasha Shrestha awarded



The Nepal Chapter of the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) held its 38th annual general meeting this week in Kathmandu and awarded its Personality of the Year 2013 to Natasha Shrestha (pic, right) of the pioneering adventure sports company based in Pokhara, Avia Club Nepal.

PATA Nepal said it honoured Shrestha for her "indefatigable effort and tenacious mission to establish air sports in Nepal". The award was conferred by Gagan Thapa of the Nepali Congress and Chief Secretary Lila Mani Poudel (pic, left).

English lessons

British Council on Sunday launched its English learning program called 'Learn English Radio'.

The show will air every Sunday and Thursday at 6pm on Radio Kantipur.



Second term

Bank of Kathmandu has extended the appointment of CEO Ajay Shrestha for another four years. The decision was

taken after a board meeting held last month.

Being human

Come Sunday Nepali shoppers will get a chance to pick their favourite Being Human merchandise at its very first outlet in the city. The outlet is a joint initiative of ABCDe's Dipendra Gurung, Manish Mandhana of Mandhana Industries, and Salman Khan.



Double excellence

Harkirat Singh Bedi, country manager of Dabur Nepal, and Kilas Ram Chaurasia, representative of Dabur India were presented the CIP (Commercially Important Person) award by President Ram Baran Yadav at a program organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies at Shital Niwas last week.

With love

Everest De Cargo, licensee of FedEx Express for Nepal, has launched a special discount scheme to mark Valentine's Day. Under this scheme, customers can get upto 50 per cent off on all gift shipments booked at FedEx Service Centres.



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Conservation matters

HUM GURUNG

An investigative report in this newspaper last month revealed that the alignment of the proposed East-West Electric Railway and the upgradation of the Hulaki Road would go right through the Chitwan National Park. The story has set off a stormy debate in the online feedback section.

While the infrastructure development projects are welcome for mass transit and to generate employment, they cannot be at the expense of the environment, especially if the new construction would jeopardise the livelihoods of many who depend on park resources.

The proposed railway could be turned into a win-win opportunity if the government embraces the concept of sustainable development. In fact, the Government of Nepal had endorsed the Sustainable Development Agenda for Nepal (2002-2017), which also stated to build and operate passenger and cargo railroads connecting the major urban areas of Nepal.

Nepal's East-West Highway is a lifeline for the country and the only transport link for major cities in the Tarai where over 50 per cent of the population lives. But the highway alone is not adequate to meet the needs

of greater economic activity of an expanding population. Generally, major mass transit arteries in developed countries such as roads and railways are built in parallel to minimise the impact on nature areas and wildlife bridges are built to preserve animal migration routes. The most practical and least disruptive alignment for the proposed railway would be to follow the track of the present East-West Highway.

While the leaked Detailed Project Report prepared by the Department of Railways proposes that one of the alignments follow the Hulaki Road through Chitwan National Park, a comprehensive environmental and social impact study has not been conducted yet. It is too early to say anything until the study is carried out which will determine the degree of impact from the proposed project.

Consultations with concerned stakeholders and the public hearing process will bring fresh thoughts to ensure

National parks are for the future of the Nepali people and the planet


the sanctuary, which is home to our flagship species such as tigers, rhinos, elephants, and birdlife, is not disturbed. The park is also the only world heritage site under UNESCO World Heritage List in the plains of Nepal. Chitwan was recognised in 1984 for its outstanding natural importance to the common heritage of humanity and it is our national treasure.

The argument of the Department of Railways that cutting through the park would save 30km is absurd. Such short-term gain cannot compare with the long-term impact on the environment and Nepal's conservation achievements.

Protected areas such as national parks, wildlife reserves,

conservation areas, and hunting reserves are a mainstay of biodiversity conservation in Nepal, while also contributing to people's livelihoods particularly at the local level. Protected areas are at the core of efforts towards conserving nature and the ecosystem services they provide us: food, clean water supply, medicines, and protection from the impacts of natural disasters. Their role in helping mitigate and adapt to climate change is also increasingly recognised.

More than 150,000 tourists visited Chitwan National Park in 2013 generating over Rs 177 million from entry fees alone and there are many other direct and indirect benefits. Nepal embarked upon a modern era of protected area management with the enactment of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1973 and Chitwan was the first and iconic reserve in the country. It is vital to coordinate between government agencies, private sectors, and non-government organisations to find a practical

solution to this new threat. Let's not forget the saying: 'When the last tree is cut, when the last river has been poisoned, when the last fish has been caught, then we will find out that we can't eat money.' After all, parks are for people and the planet and conserving them for the benefit of present and future generations is also our common responsibility. 

Hum Gurung, PhD is with the Himalayan Sustainable Future Foundation and was recently received the Australian Alumni Award for Community Service

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Trespassing into nature, #691



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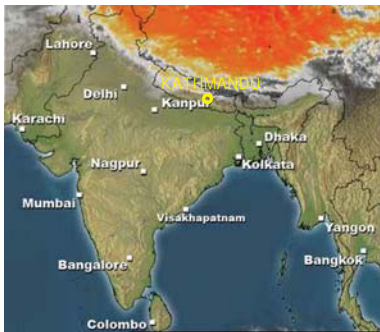
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REAL TO REEL

A young man's inspiring life is born out of extreme adversity



In 1997 Prabin Shrestha (pic, above) was attacked by an unidentified group after his band's performance at a local contest that led to a spinal cord injury and left him paralysed from the waist below. Instead of wallowing in his misfortune though, the teenager, with support from friends and family, fought hard to get back on his feet.

But visits from friends became increasingly rare and his health showed no signs of improvement. Prabin was confined to his wheelchair within the four walls of his home and completely dependent on others for his day-to-day activities. He began to lose his resolve. "Within two years of my accident, I realised how drastically



DIRECTOR'S CHAIR: Prabin Shrestha (second from left) on the sets of *Mokshya*, a film based on his life that is set to release on Friday.

my life had changed and how hard it would become," recalls Shrestha. "I became depressed."

One day, while his friends were helping him change, he fell, but none of them offered a hand. "Instead of helping me get back on my wheelchair, they said I should try getting up on my own. It was an eye-opening moment in my

life," explains Shrestha.

His passion for music was still intact, but since performing on stage was no longer possible, he was advised to take up editing as a career. In 2003, Shrestha enrolled himself in a six-month editing program at Web City, a software institute in the valley. Like most other buildings in the country this

one too was disability unfriendly. Fortunately, Nirajan Panta, a student-teacher at the institute, agreed to provide lessons at home.

Shrestha, who started out by editing wedding videos, got his first break editing Yogeshwar Amatya's music video *Chaina Timro Bhara*. Although this particular video led to many other opportunities, Prabin considers it his worst work to date. Now, after lending his chopping skills to more than a dozen films, the 36-year-old is looking forward to the release of his biopic, *Mokshya*, which Shrestha wrote and directed. The film centres on his life before and after the fateful event that left him wheelchair bound and is set to release this Friday.

"The idea for the movie first came to me seven years ago when I visited the Khagendra Navajeevan Kendra, an organisation that works with the disabled," says Shrestha.

At the centre, the video editor met many physically challenged people whose positive attitude towards life touched him greatly.

However, all of them shared a common concern. While they were confident about their individual abilities, they felt that the lack of wheelchair accessible infrastructure in Nepal prevented them from achieving and reaching their life goals.

Says Shrestha: "I want the audience to understand that even those of us who live with disabilities are equally able to live an independent life and chase our dreams."

Tsering Dolker Gurung

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On the fast track, #688
Ride on the roof, #665
Standing up to spinal injuries, #91
Trailer

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EVENTS



DAY OF THE DESTROYER, flock to Pasupati with thousands of other devotees and sing praises to the Lord that taketh. *27 February*

Chakati guff, legendary Nepali writer and academic Satya Mohan Joshi talks about his life and work. *7 February, 3 to 5pm, Gallery Mcube, Chakupat, Lalitpur, (01)5260110*

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*



GYALPO LOSAR, the Tibetan and Sherpa community celebrate the new year. *2 March*

Parallel journeys, an exhibition of the works of artists Binod Pradhan, Sunila Bajracharya, and Asha Dangol. *Runs till 8 February, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal*

Trading paint, an exhibition of the work by artist Julian Parker-Burns. *Runs till 21 February, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark Gallery, Kulimha Tol, Patan Darbar Area*

Swasthani fast, a month of reading the pilgrims' tale of the Kathmandu Valley of yore; plenty of photo opportunities at Pasupati and Sali Nadi. *Runs to 14 February*



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*

Go green, a week-long festival showcasing viable green technologies and practices, at the ongoing Climate+Change exhibition. *17 to 24 February, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal*



NOODLING, stake your claim as Nepal's top graphic designer and win up to Rs 25,000 and a spot at an exhibition in prizes. *Send entries to events@thecitymuseum.org by 20 February*

Valentine Day, all the love birds and those still flying solo, perchance romance? *14 February*

Democracy day, Nepal marks its original popular uprising. *19 February*

Incoming, the festival of colours and watery missiles, Holi, is within range. *16 March*



MOMO MANIA, all the dumplings you can eat, with plenty of booze for refreshments. *8 February, Bhrikuti Mandap*

DINING

Hotel Shangri-La, traditional Nepali cuisine with cultural show. *Rs 999, every Thursday, 7pm onwards, (01)4412999 ext 7520/7515*

Tass and Tawa, savour a wide variety of Nepali meat dishes and reserve your palate for the heavenly Chusta. *Pulchowk, Kathmandu*

Ghar-e-kabab, serving the best of north Indian cuisine, with live Sarod recitals on some days. *Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg*

Golden Dragon, breathing fire, roasting duck. *Jhamsikhel*



TRISARA, with dishes like flambeed prawns, crispy chicken, and khao soi, it would be a folly to ignore its aromas. *Lajimpat*

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

Noyoz, this tiny little joint serves food that tastes like your mother's home-cooking. *Bhatbhateni*



NEW TUSHITA RESTAURANT, relaxing ambience and good food. Don't miss out on its penne with creamy bacon and mushroom sauce. *Lajimpat, (01)44432957*

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*

K-too, if you're tired of the cold, go in for the best steak in Thamel, a warm dining room, live sports on TV, and free Irish coffee with every main course and seasonal specials. *Thamel, (01)4700043*

Capital Grill, the American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone's tastes. *Bhatbhateni*



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

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MUSIC

Shastriya Sangeet, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music every new moon night.
1 March, 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>



STARRY NIGHTS, munch on the tenderloin with Ciney Gurung performing live.
Rs 1,499, 24 January, 7pm onwards, Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999, Ext. 7520/7515

Music Jams, enjoy great live music every Tuesday. Moksh, Jhamsikhel

GETAWAYS

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Glacier Hotel, good value and friendly service for travelers on the lap of Lake Phewa. Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)-463722, www.glaciernepal.com

Atithi Resort, a perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food of your choice. Shantipatan, Lakeside, Pokhara, (61)466760, (01)4002077

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Himalaya thaw

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

8 February, Return of the ghost river, participants will reflect on artist Sheelasha Rajbhandari's contemporary art themed on Kathmandu's rivers that have been built over. 12 to 2pm

9 February, Loss and damage issues, panelists will speak on the consequence of failures to address increased greenhouse gas emissions. 12 to 4 pm

Climate+Change
Runs till 11 April, closed on Tuesdays,
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9849519933,
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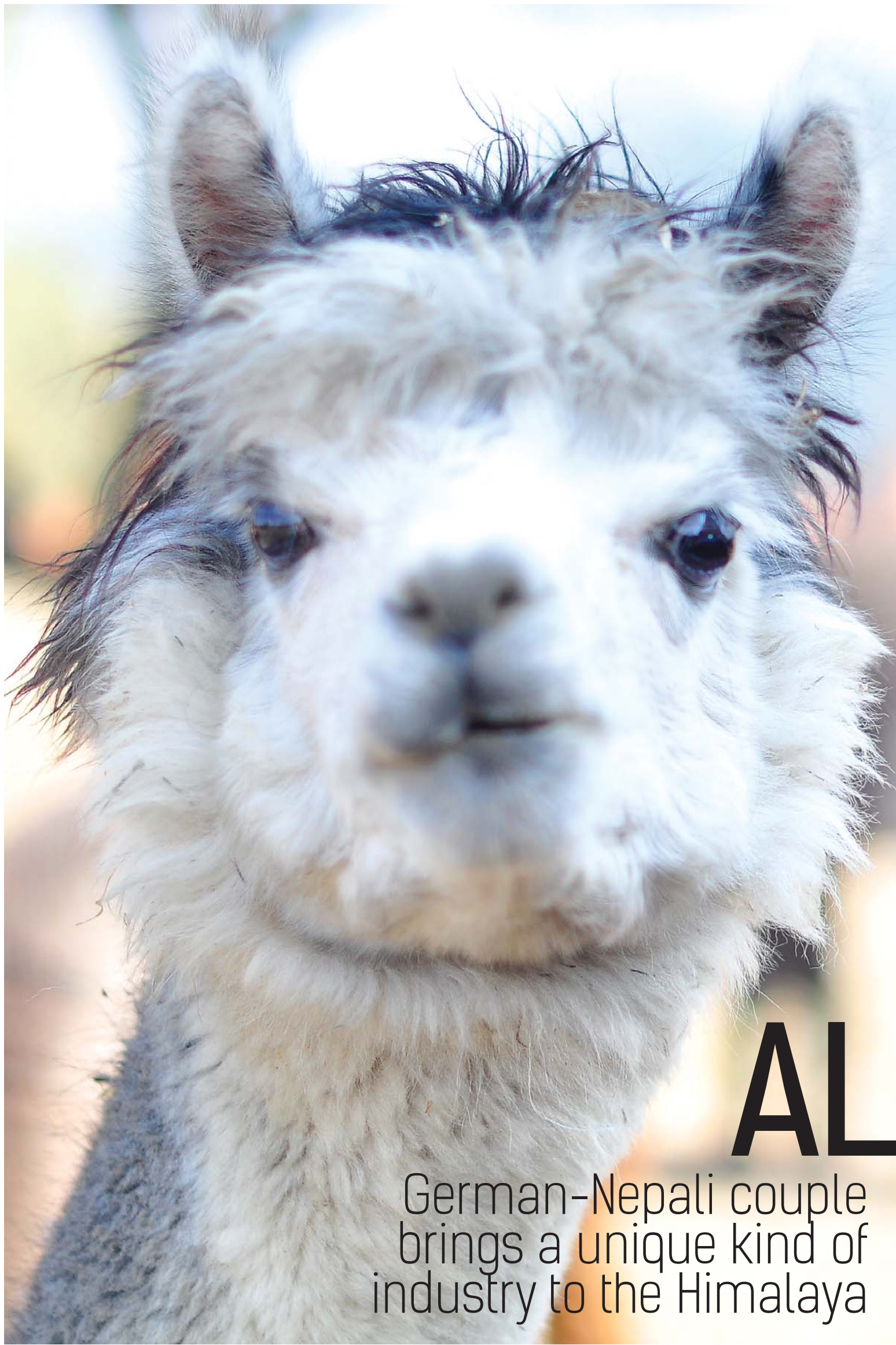


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Mahindra
Rise.



MEGHNA BALI

Godavari is the last place that people would expect to find a herd of alpacas. But German-born Hartmut Bauder and his wife Pramila have been raising, breeding, and sheering the artiodactyl mammals of South American origin in their farm since 1997.

Separated by large spaces of land fenced off with metal wires, the female alpacas roam around lazily while the males mark their territory. “Oh they’re just showing off for the girls,” laughs Pramila and explains that much likes humans, male alpacas get aggressive if they feel their space is being encroached upon. Godavari’s backdrop of pristine views, which resemble those of the Andes, seem to suit these animals just fine.

“We were prepared to face all kinds of difficulties when we were importing our first batch,” recalls Pramila. “But the process was far simpler than we initially thought. Nepali customs was surprisingly very helpful.”

On questioned why they decided to start the first and so far, only alpaca farm in the country, the Bauders say it is because the creatures are low maintenance. Gentle and submissive, alpacas are easy to sheer, can be bred anytime of the year, are extremely healthy, and live up to almost 20 years. “Why bother with anything else?” jokes Hartmut.

Along with a range of agricultural goods like olive oil, the Bauders produce a variety of hand woven blankets made of pure alpaca wool or a combination of alpaca and yak wool. The animal’s fleece is said to be five times warmer than wool and softer than cashmere. Sold for almost Rs 20,000 a piece, the blankets are exported locally and internationally and are most popular in the European market.

ALPACA FARM

German-Nepali couple brings a unique kind of industry to the Himalaya

1 The first step of making a blanket is known as warping where the size and quantity of alpaca wool are determined.

2 A woman prepares the spinning wheel to begin weaving, a method also known as bobbing.

3 A worker selects design patterns before loading it on the blankets.

4 Loose threads are clipped off.

5 Hartmut Bauder folds the finished blankets at the factory in Matatirtha.

6 Pramila poses with an alpaca blanket, which sells for almost Rs 20,000 a piece.



"Every part of the manufacturing process is done by human hands, you can just feel and see it in the quality of blankets," explains Hartmut. The factory in Matatirtha employs 17 people who work intricately on the fibres from spinning the wool to checking for loose threads.

Future plans for the couple involve expanding their farm and breeding the alpacas at higher altitudes to which they are more than adapting and perhaps training other local farmers to raise the animals. For now the Bauders are happy looking after their flock and welcome the occasional visitor who wants to know more about Nepali alpacas and are interested in the blankets. 🇳🇵

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Nepali olive makes the grade, #586
Andes to the Himalaya, #432
Photo gallery
Documentary on alpaca 🎥





ABOUT TIME

There are probably a small percentage of crotchety hyper-critical, too clever people who might even hate *About Time* – if you are one of them, I suggest you mend your ways – for honestly, only the meanest of the mean spirited could dislike this



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

charming English film that deals with all of the very stuff of life with humour, grace, compassion, and a healthy dose of fantasy – without which none of us could really function.

About Time as the name cleverly suggests, is about a rather preposterous family where only the men can travel (and that too only backwards) in time. When the great Bill Nighy, who plays James Lake the time travelling patriarch, explains this for the first time to his understandably bewildered and disbelieving son Tim (the charming Domhnall Gleeson), the younger Lake immediately checks this by getting into a dark closet, clenching his fists, and thinking of the time to which he wants to go. One of the first things he says is that he hopes it will help him get a girlfriend. And so we continue in this hyper engaging world written by Richard Curtis from whose imagination have come gems like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), the slightly sickening, but also terribly enjoyable *Love Actually* (2003), and now *About Time* which is Curtis’ third time as writer and director.

As with most cinema, one must

suspend disbelief, but with all the time travelling in this film, I beg of you now, suspend your logical brain a little bit more – it will help you to enjoy the film better and you will be glad for it.

As the loveably kind-hearted Tim fumbles around trying to woo the woman he loves, the always adorable and winsome Rachel McAdams as Mary, he does run into more than a few fixes. I will not say the film’s plot is cookie-cutter exactly, but it is just a bit predictable. What saves and elevates this film from others in its genre is the very good, perfectly delivered dialogue by the consummate cast which includes thespians such as Lindsay Duncan, Tom Hollander, and Richard E Grant (to name but a few), the lovely settings in Cornwall, and a very warm seeming London.

The film is beautifully shot by John Guleserian, a cinematographer I am unfamiliar with, but whose progress I will watch now like a hawk, for his sensibility in bringing to life the best of the English seaside and country is clearly flawless.

In this season leading up to the awarding of ‘serious’ cinema, it is hard to recommend even a slightly lighter film, especially if it is a romantic comedy about time travel. But trust me this film has its heart in the right place, it will make your heart sore, but it might also bleed – just a little with its oh so perfect end. 🍷

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HAPPENINGS



WELL DONE COMRADE: UML Chairman Jhal Nath Khanal (*right*) congratulates KP Sharma Oli (*left*), who was elected as parliamentary party leader on Tuesday.



FIRST LETTER: A mother helps her infant write her name on the floor of Baglamukhi Temple in Patan to observe Saraswati Puja on Tuesday.



JUST DANCE: Actors during the performance of the play *Agni Ko Katha* at Kathmandu Theatre Village in Lajimpat on Monday.



TIME TO PARTY: Young women enjoy Sonam Losar celebrations organised at Tudikhel on Friday to mark the Tamang new year.

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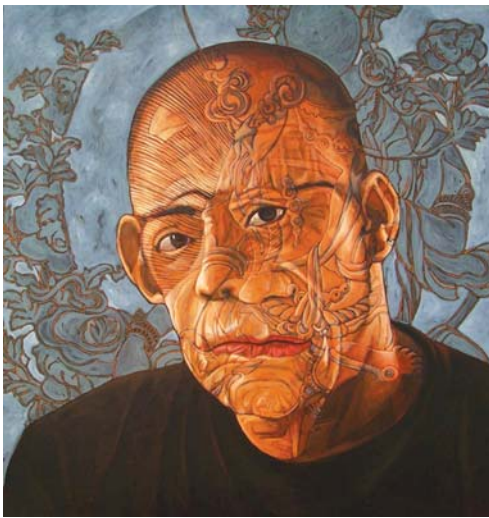
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From 7-9 February, artists Nhooja Tuladhar, Hit Man Gurung, and Sunil Sigdel will be in Bangladesh for the second Dhaka Art Summit, the largest platform for budding talents from the sub-continent. An initiative of the Samdani Art Foundation, the event will showcase more than 33 local and international galleries with over 250 participants from the region and aims to promote artistic exchange and the development of South Asian art.

From an experimental documentary on the 2004 murders of 12 Nepali workers in Iraq, to a mixed media installation featuring an actual coffin parcel sourced from Tribhuvan International Airport, to digital collages and paintings portraying the effects of war on people and their faith, Tuladhar, Gurung, and Sigdel will highlight the plight of Nepali migrant workers and breathe life into the anonymous faces buried under statistics.

Tuladhar's 10-minute documentary *Descending into Shadows* recounts the reactions of Kathmandu to the murders of the 12 Nepali migrant workers in Iraq by the Ansar al-Sunna Army and the riots that engulfed the city afterwards, mainly targeted at government buildings and



Lost in migration


foreign employment agencies. With the aim of documenting reality, Nhooja has juxtaposed the interviews with text on the incident from international news agencies interlaced with audio from the execution video in the background.

Nepal survives on the remittance sent back by migrant labourers, yet they are one of the most vulnerable demographic in the country. Thousands of young men and women escape the drudgery and hopelessness at home only to find themselves toiling in foreign lands under slave-like conditions with low wages and lack of safety equipment. The number of deaths among Nepali migrant workers is one of the highest in the sub-continent, a fact highlighted by the arrival of three to four coffins per day at Kathmandu's international airport.

Hit Man Gurung uses an actual coffin used to return the dead from abroad to depict the reduction of the migrant worker's identity to a wooden box. Expressing how each labourer shares a common story, the interior of the coffin is covered with a collage of photographs of those who apply for visas every day,

with calligraphy about their origin and destination overlaying their pictures. Outside the coffin are tiny prints of passports of the same people, on top of which is a world map, highlighting the areas with the highest concentration of Nepali migrant workers in the world.

Titled *I Have to Feed My Country and My Family* (pic, top left), his coffin installation and paintings inspired by Michaelangelo's *Pietà*, Gurung contrasts the optimistic dreams of migrant workers with their dark realities and, sometimes, their untimely deaths.

The third artist, Sunil Sigdel, is showcasing the digital collages *Last Moment of Life, My Faith Dies in Afghanistan*, and his painting *Me and My Grandfather* (pic, bottom left) to express the effects of conflict on an individual's spiritual belief, physical reality, and emotions. Inspired by Eddie Adams' iconic Vietnam War photograph *Saigon Execution*, *Last Moment of Life* shows us how despite the boundaries, human emotions and empathy triumph all else and connect us physically.  *Ayesha Shakya*

www.dhakaartsummit.org



Last week as the world celebrated the coming of the year of the horse, a bunch of us decided to ring in the Chinese New Year at one of Kathmandu's many Asian-styled restaurants. But we decided to forgo the well known establishments and opted to sample the fare at a fledgling eatery instead.

Zhang Kim in Kupondole is set up in the quintessential Chinese restro look with garish red and gold decor making its presence all around. There were tables for couples and small groups, but when we saw the private rooms with a turntable, we made ourselves comfortable.

Our first order was a simmering bowl of the familiar tomato and egg soup (Rs 160),



a staple we often enjoy back home in Singapore. The soup came in the most forgettable of crockery and we were worried that it might set the wrong precedent for the dishes to follow. The first sip, however, dispelled all doubts. The

salty taste of the eggs tangoed smoothly with the sweetness of the tomatoes and the chef's generosity with condiments meant the bowl was emptied within minutes. It was slightly puzzling how something that looked so plain could taste so

ZHANG KIM




PICS: HARIZ BAHARUDIN

delightful.

Ten skewered prawns grilled in Szechwan style with an army of dry chillies made up our next order, the aptly named peppery prawns (Rs 680). The spices were as overpowering as the oozing juiciness of the freshwater prawns and it took a lot of self control to refrain from ordering one more basket of this mouthwatering delicacy.

Our third order, the kung pao chicken (Rs 480) again was nothing much to look at, but like its predecessors, the dish matched up in taste. The succulent chicken pieces were decked out with crisp peanuts, carrots, chillies, and capsicum, and turned out as Chinese as can be together with a bowl of fluffy white rice.

Unfortunately, the momentum that we had going ended with mapo tofu (Rs 220). The tofu was not exactly malleable and the gravy was lumpy with excessive oil. The Chinese vegetables with garlic (Rs 180) was, thankfully, far better and we were glad to end our meal on a positive note.

Although it's been only a month since Zhang Kim opened its doors, it will most likely win over a lot of foodies with its authenticity and tippy-tappy service. Of course, the slightly higher prices mean you won't come here for lunch everyday, but when you do you will go back planning your next date here.  *Hariz Baharudin*

How to get there: from the Pulchok bus stand, head towards Kupondole. Zhang Kim is on your right-hand side, in between Oodni Boutique and Bricks Café.



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a 



BIKRAM RAI

The world's worst lungs

South Asia has long been a hub for heart diseases. Now, according to a research by McMaster University in Ontario, Canada the region is also beginning to top the charts for lung disease.



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

The university conducted pulmonary function tests (PFTs) on 38,517 healthy non-smokers. The participants came from 17 countries including India and were matched by height, age, and gender. The results revealed that 'healthy' Indians had the poorest lung functions in the group. These findings in the Indians for all intents and purposes can be extrapolated to reflect the lung functions in Nepalis.

In many Western hospitals, there is a separate department for PFTs. Often technicians in the department can be heard exhorting patients to blow hard into the spirometer (an apparatus used to measure the volume of air inhaled and exhaled by the lungs). Since this test is dependent on good effort, it is important for the technician to give clear instructions to patients.

Unfortunately, this simple but useful test is not commonly

performed in most of our hospitals or clinics even though the number of Nepalis suffering from lung diseases is rising quickly, thanks to worsening air quality in the cities and a high prevalence of smokers in the population. Even where spirometer tests are performed, technicians only half-heartedly instruct patients to blow into the machine thus compromising the results. Because our region clearly has such poor lung functions even in healthy people, it is imperative that PFTs be carried out properly in order to guide therapy.

There was a time when abnormal lung functions in healthy people from the sub-continent were attributed to bad genes. However, a cleverly done study in 2010 clearly challenged this notion. Children of Indian immigrants, who were born and raised in the United States, had far better lung functions than those born and raised in India. So what accounts for this difference if genes are not blameworthy?

The most obvious answer is: air pollution. Air quality standards are measured by particulate matter (PM) in the atmosphere. Larger particulate matters above 10 microns (PM 10) are trapped in the nose and mouth, but the finest and most deadly particles, PM 2.5, lodge themselves deep in the lungs and due to their

diminutive size, they bypass the defense mechanism of the lungs to cause abnormal lung functions and disease.

A recent astounding finding revealed that PM 2.5 levels were higher in parts of New Delhi than Beijing. Many cities and towns in Nepal are not far behind the Indian capital in terms of levels of dust and smog. In addition, our poor sanitation and malnutrition also negatively impact lung functions. Like Delhi (but unlike China, which has been focusing strongly on improving air quality), we too are keeping pollution and prevention measures away from public debate despite the untold damage it causes.

The World Health data reveal that deaths due to chronic lung disease are the highest in South Asia. Preventing pollution and improving air quality should therefore be top priorities for Nepal so that we can curb lung diseases along with a host of other ailments now scientifically linked to exposure to dust and smog such as heart attacks, strokes, and lung cancer.

A few hours' drive out of the Valley and we suddenly start breathing more easily. And a trip abroad or high in the mountains is such an enormous relief. Now wouldn't it be nice to cough less and breathe better right here in Kathmandu? 🇳🇵

GIZMO by YANTRICK

A musical touch

Bose's legendary sound has gone wireless with its range of SoundTouch speakers. Released in October 2013, the SoundTouch is available in 3 variants, the SoundTouch 30, its flagship model from the range, designed for larger living spaces, and the SoundTouch 20, and SoundTouch Portable for smaller spaces. The following review looks at the top-of-the-range SoundTouch 30 Wi-Fi Music System.

Bound by a 7.1 x 17.1 x 9.7 inches frame, SoundTouch 30 weighs in at a solid 18.5 pounds. As a result, the SoundTouch 30 is by no means a compact device. Sporting a simple boxy design, the SoundTouch 30 is a beautiful blend of black and white glossy plastic, with the speakers and woofer protected by a stylish-looking soft black material. Navigation buttons are placed on top of the device, while an OLED screen is located on the face. The SoundTouch 30 is designed to blend into any background, and its simple, yet stylish design certainly achieves that purpose.

Setting up the SoundTouch 30 is extremely easy. All you have to do is connect it and your laptop/computer/ mobile device to your home wi-fi network. Follow the provided instructions, and in minutes, you can stream music directly over wi-fi at the click of a button.

With wireless streaming running extremely smooth, the important question is whether the SoundTouch 30 matches up to Bose's legendary sound. Has Bose sacrificed sound quality for wireless convenience? The answer, is a resounding 'no.' The SoundTouch 30 maintains Bose's acclaimed sound quality and how. Capable of producing incredibly loud music for a spacious room, while maintaining a detailed and rich sound, the SoundTouch 30 will feature on every audiophile's dream. From floor-thumping

deep bass to crystal clear vocals, the SoundTouch 30 handles your diverse music library with equal ease.

Bose knows that when it comes to music, you know what you like, and with the SoundTouch 30, Bose gives



you the option of pre-setting six playlists, devices, and online music streaming apps on the six physical preset buttons located on top of the SoundTouch 30. These presets can be easily loaded either directly on the system or with the free SoundTouch app (for iOS and Android devices) rendering your favorite music ready at the touch of a button. Older laptops / mobile devices are not compatible with the SoundTouch 30. However, it is still possible to enjoy your music via a traditional line-in input or a USB connection.

Retailing at \$700 (approximately Rs 70,000), this boom box is a costly splurge but one that will let your ears experience sonic pleasure for long. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's Verdict: With its wireless streaming, SoundTouch 30 opens a wide-range of library for you to play at the click of a button.

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HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pity the South Asian middle class. Seemingly united in its quest for a better life, but almost always bitterly divided over politics. It is this inherently fractious nature that pulls the middle class in different directions, sometimes pitting it against popular movements.



LOOK OUT
Ajaz Ashraf

In India, the fragmented nature of the middle class will inevitably turn sections of it against the Aam Aadmi Party, the party that won the Delhi Assembly elections. However, while the middle class may agree on the problems facing the country, it will never agree on their solutions.

Perhaps the problem arises from the method employed to categorise the middle class. India's National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) categorises a five-member household as middle class if it earns an annual income ranging from Rs 200,000 to Rs 100,000 at 2001-2002 prices. On the basis of these figures, there are about 70 million to 153 million middle class Indians.

So a household earning Rs 17,000 a month and another earning Rs 83,000 will not have the same views. The two will necessarily inhabit two different worlds. The neighbourhood they live in, the degree of influence they

wield on the system, and the nature of problems they encounter in their daily lives will be different. This will foster varying perceptions about problems and their solutions.

Income aside, a middle class person in a mofussil town will perceive politics differently from his or her metropolitan counterpart. Caste or religious or linguistic identities also induce differences in political choices of two persons sharing the same class position. This isn't to say that class as a category doesn't exist in the Indian context, but to emphasise that the flawed definition of the Indian middle class based on income-range makes us view it as a monolith,

united in its intent and action.

That the middle class isn't a monolith can be seen from the sheer variety of its responses to the AAP government's policies. For instance, the subsidy it offered on power and water has enthused those constituting the lower layers of the middle class, but alienated its upper segment. Partly, it is because this measure is in violation of the economic philosophy this segment espouses. But it might also be because it doesn't stand to benefit from a subsidy that is linked to consumption.

Similarly, anecdotal evidence suggests the anti-corruption helpline has helped bolster support for AAP in the lower layers of the middle class.

Divided down the middle

Anti-corruption drive in India separates the beneficiaries and losers among the middle class

This group reels under the extortionist demands of petty officials and police to have their legitimate rights enforced without paying bribe.

But this measure has angered those who benefit from a venal system – yes, petty officials and constables who too constitute the lower layers of the middle class. It will, in the long-term, alienate the owners of, say, commercial establishments who bribe inspecting officials to have their flouting of laws condoned. Indeed, attempts to cleanse the system will eventually divide the middle class into beneficiaries and losers from anti-corruption measures.

Even more interesting a study is the schism in the upper segment of the middle class to the undeniable vigilantism of the AAP's Delhi law minister Somnath Bharti. He led a mob that compelled the police to raid a house in which Ugandans lived and which was allegedly running a drug-and-prostitution ring. The mob surrounded a car of Ugandan women and pressured the police to have

them undertake a medical test for substance abuse. The results were negative.

However, anecdotal accounts imply the culturally conservative section of the upper middle class segment dubs those opposing Bharti's vigilantism as too westernised and accuses them of promoting a licentious lifestyle not in conformity with 'Indian traditional values'. By contrast, the liberals in this segment accuse the AAP of tacitly endorsing patriarchy and implicitly imposing their notions of culture on Ugandans and others alike.

It is possible that the negative reportage in the Indian media about the AAP springs from the fact that journalists overwhelmingly belong to the upper middle class. Nevertheless, as AAP grows wings, it will forage for other social bases for sustenance, through policy formulations that would splinter the middle class even further. But then, perhaps, we need to re-define the middle class to capture its heterogeneity in terms of both income and culture. ashrafajaz3@gmail.com

HOUSE OF MUSIC CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN NEPAL

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21st FEB FRIDAY **Jazz at House**

Live Show: KJC combo
Kismat's Jazz Quartet

Venue: House Of Music

Time: 7 p.m. onwards

Cover Charge: Rs. 200

14th FEB FRIDAY **R&B and Motown night**

Live Show: Hot Five and friends

Venue: House Of Music

Time: 7 p.m. onwards

Cover Charge: Rs. 200

28th FEB FRIDAY **All Star Blues**

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Mukti Shakya & friends

Venue: House Of Music

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UNITED BY GRIEF: Moti, who is carrying a photo of her disappeared husband, and Kumari (*far right*) were among the 70 women representing victims from both sides of the conflict, who travelled to Kathmandu last week to share their experiences.



SHARING SORROW TO EASE PAIN

Nearly eight years after the conflict ended, female relatives of victims find strength in numbers

Truth, now

On 2 January, Nepal's Supreme Court ruled out the provision of amnesty for serious war crimes included in the ordinance signed by President Ram Baran Yadav in March 2013 and directed the government to form two separate commissions on Truth and Reconciliation and Enforced Differences.

As power-sharing negotiations for a new government get underway, the issue of justice for war crimes will no doubt play an important role in the give and take. But conflict victims are worried that like previous governments, the new one too will try to sweep conflict-

era atrocities under the carpet and stall the formation of the commissions.

"The power centres shifted after the November election, but nothing has changed at the leadership level," says Ram Kumar Bhandari, a human rights activist whose father was disappeared by state security forces in 2001. "The political leaders will try to save each other's back this time round too, which will delay the implementation of the SC's verdict."

On Friday, conflict victims and their families from across Nepal will travel to Kathmandu to submit a letter to President Yadav demanding to know the truth and reminding the state that the war is far from over for them.

2.30pm, 7 February, Shivapuri School, Maharaigunj

JUANITA MALAGON

Moti C, 56, travelled five days from Kalikot in far western Nepal to Kathmandu with three aims in mind: attend the National Journey to Peace and Justice Workshop, find her husband, and get the legal allowance she is entitled to as compensation of the spouse of a disappeared person.

She was among 70 other women from 38 districts who came to the capital last week to share their stories, concerns, and hopes. They also got legal advice, shared a panel discussion with experts, wrote a formal declaration, and submitted it to the government. The workshop that brought together affected women from both sides of the conflict has been the first event ever of this

kind in post-conflict Nepal.

Torture victims, women with disabilities and wives of disabled husbands, ex-female combatants, conflict widows, victims of the Madhes Andolan, and women affected by displacement, gender-based violence, and disappearances, were the eight categories selected by the two organisers, Women Human Rights (WHR) and Sankalpa.

On the first day, Moti took a small photo out of her bag and held it in her fingers. It is her husband who disappeared during the conflict 13 years ago. She still hopes she can find him. Women like Moti don't just want compensation, they also want the truth.

Sangita B is in her early 20s and has been running from one government office to another to inquire about the

fate of her father, who was also disappeared 10 years ago. According to existing laws, families of the disappeared need to wait 12 years before they can claim property rights and other entitlements. For the estimated 1,300 families with disappeared members, this has caused social, economic, and psychological trauma.

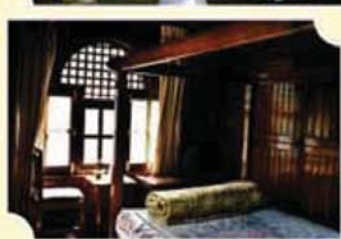
There are no official figures about conflict affected women and the government's tally differs with that from human rights groups. What this means is that many victims are denied the basic right to food, medical services, jobs, and reintegration into society. Some of the victims have received training and financial compensation, but there has been no effort to find out what they really need.

Kumari S is 30 and carries her two-year-old boy to the podium during the conference to introduce herself as a victim of torture. She's from Ramechhap and explains that she was tortured and harassed because her husband was in the army. Listening to her and nodding their heads are many other women with similar stories. Some weep and the others comfort them. They are from different sides in the conflict, but today they face the same problems: bereavement, the mental strain of having to deal with disappeared relatives, lack of money, stigmatisation and discrimination, illnesses, and little opportunity to improve their lives.

Many of the women are survivors and have become stronger because of their suffering, they raise their

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PICS: JUANITA MALAGON


Rita Sen Oli, Butwal

I was waiting for my husband Gir Bahadur to come home for lunch when I heard a loud explosion outside. An assistant sub-inspector, he was deployed for security at Rammani College, Butwal that day and was among the dozens of police officers killed in the ambush. He said he would come back so we could eat together, but that was the last I ever heard from him.

It is difficult running the family with a fraction of his pension money. But more than that, what hurts me the most is seeing senior police officers, who I had hoped would help me and other families find justice, kowtowing to Maoist leaders. Subsequent governments have failed to live up to their promise of providing closure to families of war victims on both sides.



hands and participate in the discussions confidently. It is obvious they are empowered by solidarity and each other's presence. When the final draft of their collective declaration is open for discussion, they break into applause to show approval. They want to be loud because they want to be heard. They know that together they can make a difference and change their lives for the better.

At the end of the three day long workshop Moti, Sangita, Kumari, and the other women return to their homes across Nepal. They say the trip has made them feel better and they appreciate the support they got from their peers and the organisers. They now know that they are heard because they have a collective voice. 

Women for Human Rights
www.whr.org.np
(01) 444 6020

Sankalpa
www.sankalpa.org.np
(01) 5554158

nepalitimes.com 

Whereabouts unknown, #671
Searching for answers, #517
Same road, #517

Rangamati Rajbanshi, Jhapa

On the morning of 4 April 2004, Nepal Army soldiers came knocking at our door to tell me that they had killed my husband Sambhu because he was a Maoist. He had a habit of disappearing for days on end without informing me, but I had no idea that he was a part of the rebel army. We found his bloodied body bearing bullet wounds near the banks of the Mai River. There was no investigation and since the army was involved we feared losing our lives too.

We left our village and moved to Damak. I borrowed money from friends and family and started a small tea shop, but life has been extremely difficult since

losing the sole bread-winner of the family. I can't afford to send my two sons to school, so they now work as daily wage labourers. The Rs 300,000 that the government provided us as compensation was mostly spent on repaying our debt. It has been years since anybody from the Maoist party visited us. We have no savings or steady source of income. I am getting old now and I often worry about my sons.

I also fear that I will die without knowing who killed my husband and why the perpetrators were never put behind bars.



Mangali Gurung, Chitwan

It has been 11 years since I last saw my husband Jhalendra. I was pregnant with our second daughter when the army took him away saying that he was a wildlife poacher. The next morning, I heard in the news that he had been killed in an ambush. I refuse to believe in the lie until they show me his dead body or the place where he was killed and buried.

Although I had a slight inkling that Jhalendra was involved with the Maoist party, I never questioned him. Besides, he had done nothing wrong. After his death, I have had to fight very hard for my basic rights including obtaining a citizenship and a fair share of his property to secure my daughters' future. My quest for justice will not stop until the day government tells me the whole truth and gives me the name of my husband's murderers.

Reporting by Sabita Shrestha, Bachu BK, and Gopal Gartoula



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Oli's time to shine

Gunaraj Luitel, *Annapurna Post*, 5 February

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट

It had been a long time coming for KP Oli, who on Tuesday defeated Chairman Jhal Nath Khanal by a margin of 23 votes to become the parliamentary party leader for the UML at the constituent assembly. Five years ago at the party's eighth general convention in Butwal, Oli could only watch on in despair as Khanal won the race for the top post. Now, he can finally have the last laugh and also extend his sphere of influence within the UML.

Before this week, the public perception of Oli was that of a clownish political figure who had a proclivity for colourful speeches. But now that he has the responsibility of overseeing all of UML's activities within the CA hall, people will be forced to take him more seriously. Senior leaders, who were tired of seeing Khanal and Madhav Kumar Nepal hog the limelight, are also happy with Oli's victory.

While his contemporaries, Nepal and Khanal, have both made it to Singha Darbar, the post of prime ministership has so far remained out of Oli's grasp. This is not to say he has never

had ambitions to be the head of government. On the contrary, close aides claim he has been preparing for the top job for almost a decade now. Having gained the trust of national and international powers, it won't be surprising if Oli moves into Baluwater in a few months' time.

The UML has a long history of breaking apart after such partisan elections. But after the Butwal meet, party members have shown the maturity to accept democratic results. Another positive aspect of having Oli lead the CA, is that the UML will finally have a clear ideological standpoint on the assembly floor.

Critics often say the UML seesaws when the going gets tough. Fortunately, Oli has always made his position clear. He isn't close to the Maoists so he will keep the UCPN (M) under check, but nor will he be subservient towards the NC. There will, of course, be some problems when the party is led by one and its lawmaking is handled by another, but Oli's appointment will go a long way in ensuring that the UML becomes a dominant leftist force in Nepal.

The newly elected parliamentary party leader will, however, have to pay his supporters handsomely and Bamdev Gautam tops the list of allies. Despite Oli's consummate people's skill, he will face stern challenges from those who want to drive wedge between him and

Gautam. The other charge hurled at Oli is that he doesn't pay attention to problems. But he is a confident man and has proved his mettle over the years. When he was home minister, the head of the police praised him for fulfilling all the promises he made. He left a good impression as a decision-maker when he was deputy prime minister, minister for foreign affairs, and also while handling the discussions on Bhutanese refugees. Detractors within the party say Oli has risen to the top on muscle power. But other UML members are eager to work under him because he has a reputation of taking supporters under his wings. All politicians use money and might, but Oli is different in that he never plays his cadre against each other. His time has come.



DEVAKI BISTA

Argument, counter argument

Ramsharan Bajgain, *Naya Patrika*, 4 February

भार्यो पत्रिका

The UML will vote for its parliamentary party leader on Tuesday. The night before, senior leader Madhav Nepal proposed Chairman Jhal Nath Khanal for the job while Deputy Chairman Bamdev Gautam put forward KPS Oli as a candidate. As talks became more and more inconclusive, the following dialogue ensued at party headquarters in Balkhu:

Madhav Kumar Nepal: We mustn't forget party tradition. Relegating the chairman to the sidelines and making someone else lead the parliamentary panel is completely unthinkable. We must show everyone that we are united by voting for Khanal.

KPS Oli: What a turnaround. Didn't you call me at your house right after CA elections and told me that Khanal was a hapless leader. You even said there would be more anarchy under Khanal, that the party's

parliamentary panel broke down spectacularly last time, and that he didn't even make you his deputy even though you backed him.

Nepal: When did I say that? You come here and lie? How can you spread such lies at a party meeting?

Oli: You seem to have forgotten that I wasn't alone at your house during the meeting. Bamdev was there and so was Ishwar Pokhrel.

Bamdev Gautam: That's right. You called us saying Khanal would come later, but you had never invited him in the first place. Pokhrel even asked you if you wanted to lead. You shrugged it off, saying no, but then again stated that the chairman wasn't good enough.

Nepal: You can't make things up like this. We could find ourselves in a precarious situation if one of us leads the house and someone other than Chairman Khanal becomes the prime minister.

Oli: How many rules do you have in your pocket? Do you have a book of examples that you carry everywhere to come up with replies when you want things to go your way? You did not lead the parliamentary panel in CA-I, but that didn't stop you from becoming prime minister.

Three challenges

Prakash Chandra Lohani, *Kantipur*, 6 February

कान्तिपुर

There is renewed optimism in the country after the second Constituent Assembly elections, even though the same faces will be leading the house. As it becomes increasingly certain that the Nepali Congress will form an alliance with the UML, the two oldest parties of Nepal would do well to focus their attention on the following issues.

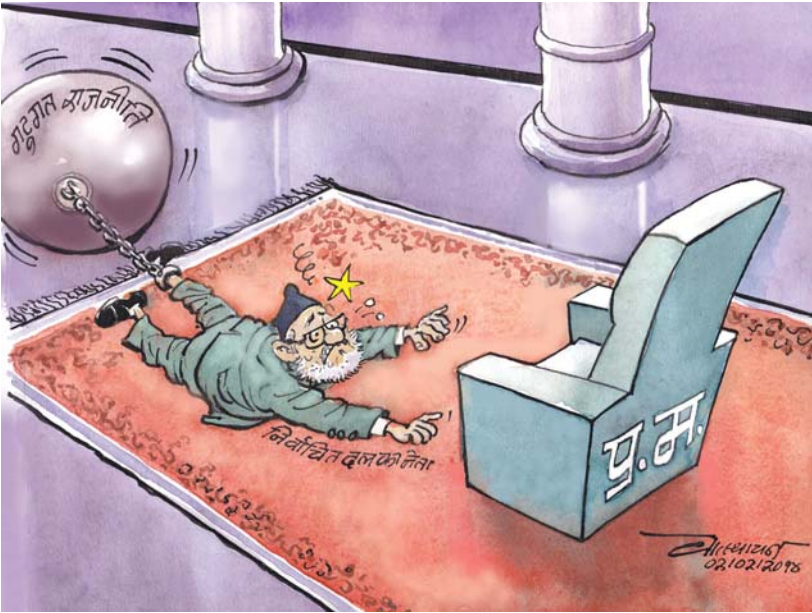
1. Draft a win-win constitution. This is harder than it sounds, but not as difficult as it was five years ago. The first CA couldn't reach an agreement on issues of federalism and state structuring. Talks also broke down over the model of governance. All parties took a defensive stance and their selfishness ultimately led to the demise of the assembly. No one ever imagined a second CA and that is why it is imperative for parties to be flexible this time. There is ground for a middle path and also possibility for compromise in the nature, number and name of prospective provinces. The parties realise that the equation has

changed and so has the public mandate – Nepalis want results, not ideological battles.

2. The new government must make the economy a top priority. The severe lack of jobs and widespread corruption have brought this country's progress to a grinding halt. While the state is all too happy about the billions of dollars that our migrant labourers send back home, it has done very little to create new jobs for our youth within Nepal. The government has also failed to utilise the large amounts of remittance for investments or to generate capital.

The wholesale plunder of the state exchequer must also stop immediately. The new CA is an opportunity for political leaders to gain the public trust by purging their parties as well as the state mechanism of such corrupt practices and focusing on the larger good.

3. Enforce the rule of law and improve security measures so that local as well as international investors feel confident enough to start new projects and common citizens feel like they have a good and safe future here.



Chair: PM
Ball and chain: Factional politics
Arm: Leader of elected party

कान्तिपुर Batsyayan in *Kantipur*, 3 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“It's not that I submitted to Oli. I just feel that those outside the party leadership also have immense potential.”

Senior leader of the UML Bamdev Gautam reacting to suggestions that he is after personal gains, *Naya Patrika*, 4 February



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Biswanath Upadhyay, 84

Radheshyam Adhikari, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2 February

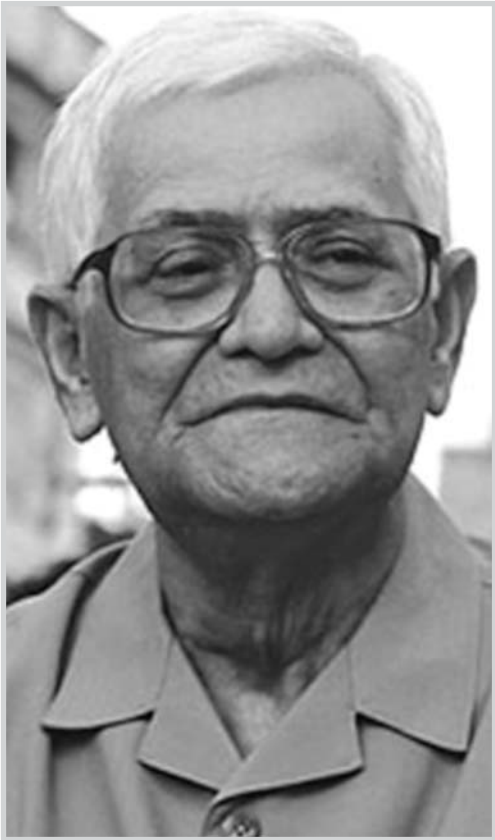


Biswanath Upadhyay, one of the pivotal figures in Nepal’s legal landscape responsible for the 1990 constitution, passed away on 30 January after suffering a fatal brain haemorrhage. In his more than four decades of service, Upadhyay’s earned praise not only from the legal sector, but also from his contemporaries in public administration for his integrity and courage to make difficult decisions.

The son of Malangawa in Sarlahi district started his career as a legal officer in Nepal Rastra Bank in 1955, after which he entered the Ministry of Law. Even before he joined the judiciary, Upadhyay made a name for himself after he was put in charge of revising the Muluki Ain. He joined the Supreme Court in 1972, and one of the earliest cases that he oversaw led the administration to amend and improve the country’s inheritance laws.

With his court rulings during the Panchayat years, Upadhyay showed unprecedented commitment towards maintaining the judiciary’s independence and reining in the powers of the executive. The rulers found him a constant irritant and did everything in their power to stifle his progress, including removing him from the courts and transferring him to the anti-graft body known as the Abuse of Authority Prevention Commission.

After the people’s uprising in 1990,



Upadhyay chaired the Constitution Suggestion Committee. There he was a key contributor in the drafting of the landmark document that all political actors agreed to within the given deadline, a feat unmatched by today’s distracted lawmakers. At a time when the royal court was deeply concerned about its constitutional powers, Upadhyay also managed to keep dialogues between the

Former chief justice’s contribution to democracy should serve as an example for today’s lawmakers

king and revolting parties constructive.

Drafting a constitution is a highly specialised job, and even Upadhyay’s critics agree that he was second to none at this craft. Former Chief Justice Nayan Bahadur Khatri once told me that Upadhyay single-handedly formulated the Evidence Act, another milestone in our legal sector. Any student of law can attest to how important this particular act is.

Once the constitution was passed, Upadhyay was promoted to the top most position at Nepal’s highest court. Although this may sound like the most obvious option, it was not a unanimous appointment at the time. Panchayat-era rulers feared that having Upadhyay as chief justice would make life difficult for them and thus politicians harboured a deep sense of mistrust against him.

But the man remained steadfast in his decision-making. He handled issues like the Tanakpur barrage and the parliament’s dissolution, which lent very easily to heavy political wrangling, with measured confidence amidst both praise and criticism.

I became chairman of the Nepal Bar

Association the same time Upadhyay headed the SC. Both bodies shared a high degree of understanding and trust. At that time the bar didn’t have its own building and I asked him if we should request the government to provide us land for an office. In reply, Upadhyay said that the bench and the bar were two sides of the same coin and helped establish our workplace.

After retiring from the judiciary in 1996, Upadhyay kept himself informed about the country. Political leaders, prime ministers and government officials all sought his advice in times of uncertainty. His interviews became reference material for us all.

Still, one can’t say that all his decisions were free from controversy. One occasion worth remembering is his ruling to reinstate the parliament dissolved by then Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari in August 1995. The repercussions of that move are still being discussed today and will be relevant in the future.

But it would not be exaggeration to say that Biswanath Upadhyay’s achievements and contributions are the zenith of Nepal’s legal history. He may no longer be with us today, but his body of work will guide lawmakers for generations to come.

Radheshyam Adhikari is a former Constituent Assembly member and former president of the Nepal Bar Association.

Need to go hi-tech

Editorial, *Karobar*, 4 December



Thousands of Nepalis risk losing the opportunity of working in Malaysia if the medical centres here do not upgrade to biometric testing system, as stipulated by the Malaysian government two years ago. Nearly 200,000 Nepalis fly out to Malaysia every year, making it the third largest receiver of our migrant labourers.

In 2012, the Malaysian government notified Nepal and 13 other countries to make the necessary changes. While the Except for us, everyone else has begun the process of introducing the new system putting Nepal in a spot of bother. Even Nepal’s Ambassador to Malaysia, Niranjana Man Singh Basnet, seems to be tiring of reminding authorities back home to take the directive seriously.

Some medical centres claim that the exorbitant cost (billed at approximately \$8,000 dollars) is preventing them from installing the system. But they are willing to adopt the technology if the

government initiates talks with its Malaysian counterpart about providing financial assistance in the upgradation. Instead of creating unnecessary debate regarding the new technology, the state should facilitate the private sector to

overhaul their system so that Nepalis working in Malaysia can continue to do so.

Upgrading to biometric system will solve many problems that plague the present medical assessment system in Nepal. Many medical centres have been providing clean chit to aspiring migrant workers despite their serious health conditions. Such cases have resulted in the return of many Nepali labourers from Malaysia because they are deemed unfit, which not only costs thousands of rupees to the workers, but also raises questions regarding Nepal’s medical standards.

The concerned authorities need to stop bickering over the use of biometric and work on developing semi-skilled workers who can go abroad to work in secure conditions with better wages and ensuring the safe return of our illegal migrants.



A Nepali introduction

Nishcal, *www.mysansar.com*, 3 February



On one of the many chilly evenings spent at watering holes in Europe, I had an interesting encounter with a foreigner. I was enjoying my drink when a gentleman asked if he could join me at my table. “Yes please,” I said. He looked 30 to me.

For minutes, we didn’t exchange a word. The silence was finally broken when he asked me where I was from. After living abroad for a long time, I have started enjoying

sharing stories of my country and people to foreigners. So I began by saying I was from Nepal.

But his second question triggered a mixed feeling. “So, where is this Nepal?” he asked. I was angry and surprised that this person had no knowledge about my beloved country. “You must have at least heard something about Nepal and Nepalis,” I said. When he continued to shake his head looking dumbstruck, I thought it was my duty as a proud Nepali to enlighten this gentleman.

Nepal is the birthplace of Buddha, the land of Everest and the brave Gurkhas, I began.

Till this day, we as Gurkhas continue to bleed in the fights of others. How great are we that we readily send our sons and brothers to foreign lands to fight for others’ cause, but when it comes to doing something for Nepal, we are not even ready to shed a sweat.

When Bollywood stars say they dislike Nepal, we become furious and spill all the anger on our countrymen. In early 2000 we proved our love for the country by physically assaulting our brothers from the plains in response to a Bollywood newbie’s opinion. In our show of patriotism we burned houses, looted shops and vandalised property. But when India’s Border Security Force enters our lands and does the same, we sit with our arms closed. That is how much we love our country.

We, Nepalis are capable of doing anything in the world. For money, we trade our sisters, set alight our daughter-in-laws, for social traditions, we lock them up in cow sheds during their menstrual cycle, term old-helpless women witches and attack them. We elect crooks as our leaders because we have no qualms about trading our votes for money in return.

“So, now you know how Nepalis are,” I said. His shocked face encouraged me to continue but my empty glass and wallet told me otherwise. I looked at him, said, “I am proud to be a Nepali,” and walked away.



Have a safe fright

Responding to a worldwide security alert, the Tribhuvan Antinational Airport has decided to install a pair of mental detectors to prevent passengers from acting too smart on planes. The brain scanners will be installed just after customs and immigration. The state-of-the-art magnetic resonance detectors will greatly reduce the workload of security personnel by issuing colour-coded alarms. For example, green means the passenger is an idiot and doesn't even need to be frisked. Blue means the guy is of borderline intelligence and needs to fail a further written IQ test before being allowed to board. Amber alerts airport security of passengers with proclivity to air rage and thus need to be darted with a tranquiliser gun before boarding. And red is for passengers who are just too clever and can't be allowed on board under any circumstances.



Since we worship all tourists as gods, the airport has to be like heaven. Which is why the following improvements have been introduced effective immediately:

1. A fast-track queue for tourists

- without visas so that the average time they spend in the immigration line is now reduced to three hours.
2. A free sauna has been installed at the Departure Area so that departing passengers can relax, sweat like pigs, and pass out if they so wish.
3. All clocks have been removed from the entire airport premises. This is a deliberate attempt to give passengers the impression that all flights are on time. (Flight Attendant: "Ladies and Gentlemen, Gods and Goddesses, we have just landed in Kathmandu, where the local time does not exist.")
4. The baggage carousel area now has extra trolleys which are equipped with experimental oval wheels to give extra traction. Passengers also have a choice of extreme left-leaning and extreme right-leaning trolleys depending on their political affiliation.



It has come to the Ass' notice that some of you have been using the right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Interim Constitution to moan and groan about all the new security bandobast at the airport. This is unpatriotic. If you

don't stop whining we'll lock you up. And that's a threat.

I know you haven't, but if you ask me, it is quite reassuring to know that fellow passengers are not carrying lethal military hardware like tweezers and reusable Swiss Army tooth picks. Which is why I, for one, am happy with the beefed up security. Imagine what would happen if the guards let their guards down and allowed passengers to take deadly nail clippers on board. ("Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the flight deck. We've just intercepted a passenger who has taken off his socks to clip his toenails and are now diverting back to Kathmandu. There is absolutely no reason to panic until we tell you to. Have a safe fright.")

Dear and departing passengers will be glad to know that the number of full body frisk-cum-massage has been increased to four. First is the two-in-one unisex masseur after the x-ray who kneads your right solar plexus gently while his other hand gropes your private sectors. You then turn the other cheek, as it were, and he mashes your gluteus maximus carefully, paying special attention to the contents of the wallet in your back pocket. There is a follow-up session after immigration where there is more manhandling and finally a rubber stamp certifying that you are not about to explode.

By the time you get to your seat, you are feeling like a mashed potato. So you just sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight. That is, until the terrorist next to you slips off his socks and starts clipping his toenails.

The Ass



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