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7 (NEW AND OLD) WONDERS OF NEPAL

The spring trekking season is off to a glorious start. Unseasonably heavy snowfall in March has meant that most routes are still covered in snow, like the Thorong La trail (below). On the occasion of the 700th issue of *Nepali Times* we bring you a list of the seven new and old wonders of Nepal that are waiting to be re-discovered.

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700 WEEKS

We have had a ringside seat to the country's ups and downs for the past 14 years

Fourteen years is just a blink of an eye in the history of nations. And it seems like yesterday when the first edition of this newspaper came out on 19 July 2000. In fact, *Nepali Times* started coming out online before it launched its weekly hardcopy edition, and the digital archive of this paper is a much-sought reference tool for researchers (*see page 4*).

Looking back at the 700 front pages since then will give readers an idea of time wasted, hopes of peace and development raised only to be dashed, democracy won and lost and won again. The nation underwent a dramatic transformation: from monarchy to republic, from conflict to ceasefire, yet many things remain the same.

Seven of those 14 years the country was at war, and seven years have passed since the ceasefire went into effect. But the objective conditions that gave the Maoists the reason to opt for armed struggle still remain: the feudalistic exclusion of a large section of the population, discrimination and ostracisation, social inequities and injustice. So what was all the killing for, the people ask. Although remarkable improvements were made in increasing the lifespan of the average Nepali, the quality of life deteriorated as development was pushed back a decade by the war.

Hopelessness and joblessness pushed Nepalis to

migrate in increasing numbers in search of work overseas. Today, half the young men between the ages of 20-40 are working abroad, many midhill districts have seen a human haemorrhage with declines of up to one-third of their population. In contrast, the cities and the Tarai are exploding.

Here at the paper, we got a ringside seat to all the major events of our recent history: the spread of the Maoist conflict

to large parts of the country, the 2001 royal massacre and its aftermath, king Gyanendra's military coup in February 2005, the People's Movement of April 2006 and the ceasefire, the 2008 elections and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, right up to the 2013 election and the slow motion four months since. And each time the country took a step forward towards consolidation of democracy and ensuring stability, we took two steps back.

We have closely followed the pulse of the people through the Himalmedia annual public opinion polls, which have accurately predicted the outcome of elections and the people's trust and faith in the democratic system even though they don't seem to think much of the politicians on offer. The polls have reflected a clear public perception that equates local elections with local development. The surveys have also indicated that the people trust the media more than any other institution of government, legislature, judiciary or civil society. This puts an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of the media to be public service oriented, and to defend the citizen's right to information.

We at Himalmedia thank the readers and partners of *Nepali Times* for their trust and support over the past decade-and-a-half for our effort to ensure independent, in-depth and meaningful journalism.



ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

OIL AND WATER

Burning tyres, buses and then dousing them with precious water is loss to no one but the public. ('Mixing oil and water', Editorial, #699). And this time the price hike and the protests that followed looked so orchestrated. The mother party announces the hike and their student wings take up as crusaders to get the prices down. Why don't these tyre and bus burning good for

nothing goons protest to ensure that corruption is checked at the NOC and the hundreds of gas stations around town that sell adulterated fuel in tampered fuel tanks.

Nirmal Acharya

■ Strong column. Of the reasons for Nepal's wrong policies on energy and water that this article mentions ("misguided and short-sighted policies, bad governance, gross mismanagement, and sheer stupidity") I would go for "sheer stupidity".

Dinesh

STALIN AND MAO

Well, I admire both Stalin and Mao for one reason only: Stalin killed 40 million and Mao killed 70 million of their own people ('Nuisance value as strategy, Trishna Rana, #699). Now, who can top that?

Luv Nepal

■ So, why should one not

admire Mao and Stalin? You could, you have one of them in Nepal.

Biondi Scrittore

■ Only in Nepal is a mass murderer allowed to roam freely in the streets of the capital.

What a disgrace to honest, hard working Nepalis. If Baburam Bhattarai had any guts, he would quit the company of Dahal today. What is he waiting for? No Nepali should forget that the Maoists were terrorists. It's due to incompetent idiots within the NC (read S B Deuba), and the UML, (men like Khanal or Nepal), that a Maoist killer became the PM. It is sheer folly to believe that these publicly corrupted men will somehow, by the wave of a magic wand, relieve 28 million Nepalis from their miserable existence. The men that have lied to us, looted our wealth will never do anything good for us. Can the brave SSP Ramesh Kharel come to our rescue and arrest the real criminals of Nepal.

We hope so. And the burning question is, how will we punish these lying netas when they fail to deliver the constitution in the next eight months? There must be some payback. The Shah Kings were just one family, looting poor Nepalis. Now we have 25 to 30, all of them looting the poor Nepalis like there is no tomorrow. Enough is enough. Let's take our country back from the hands of criminals masquerading as leaders of

political parties.

Narayana Prasad

FLOUR POWER

The effort to improve the efficiency of traditional water mills is commendable but more needs to be done. ('Flour power', Ayesha Shakya, #699). Judging by how these have benefited the lives of the local people, the process of conversion needs to be enhanced. However, more attention needs to be paid while the transition to improved water mills takes place to prevent any such malfunction in the future. If this project is highly successful, perhaps it can be expanded to provide better hydropower energy to generate electricity for cities. It's a shame that regardless of the ample water resources, we still have to suffer loadshedding.

Nirvan Lama

■ Excellent idea. This really is the way forward. More effort to spread the use of improved water mills badly needed.

@pigreen

MELAMCHI MIRAGE

It is terribly unfortunate that there is a shortage of water in Kathmandu ('What to do while waiting for the Melamchi mirage', Bhrikuti Rai, #699). I sincerely hope that the situation will improve and that such a basic human necessity will be available to everyone in Nepal.

Hari Bhadr Gurung

■ Something needs to be done to ensure that leaking water pipes do not jeopardise our city's precious supply of water.

@Sumirai

HIGH FIVE

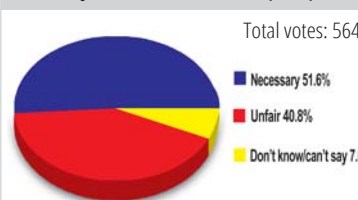
Kudos to this group of young, inspiring women who want to climb all seven peaks in the seven continents ('High five', Nimadoma Sherpa, #699). It's a pity that three of them couldn't make it to the top. However, they showed a great example of team spirit by choosing to forego their claim of the peak for the sake of the group. I wish them the best of luck for their remaining climbs and hope they get support from both the government and corporates for their future expeditions.

Mingma Doma



nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll #700

Q. What do you think of the recent hike in petrol price?



Weekly Internet Poll # 701.
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will there be any improvement in this year's SLC pass percentage?

The democratic imperative

The new benchmark for democracy in the days to come will not be procedure, but performance

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad came. He saw. And he preached.

Tales of economic transformation have a certain appeal in Nepal as it reminds us of our own incapacity to make such progress, and we wallow in self-pity about opportunities squandered and years wasted. But perhaps we liked to hear about the Malaysian miracle from its chief



THIS IS IT
Rubeena Mahato

architect because of the faint hope that under the right conditions, this country could also be turned around.

Mahathir wasn't saying anything original this week in Kathmandu. Of course, political stability is imperative for economic development, indeed labour-intensive industries are necessary to create jobs, investing in education is obviously imperative. But is it necessary to curtail democracy, stifle press freedoms, for economic progress? It isn't an either-or. The Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew model trades democracy for growth.

Every decade or so, Nepal's rulers declare that they will turn the country into a Switzerland or a Singapore. These wild proclamations actually reveal a hidden dictatorial streak in our leaders.

The political instability since 1990 and the incompetence of democratic leaders is often blamed for Nepal still being mired in poverty and stagnation. The people therefore vent their frustration at the system of multiparty democracy rather than the leaders who lack accountability. Hence, this yearning for strongman rule. In the new constitution, this viewpoint is represented by the demand for a directly-elected president. But history has shown that executive presidents tend to get addicted to power and turn into dictators rather more frequently than prime ministers in parliamentary systems.

People also speak of the need to transplant the current crop of corrupt and incompetent leaders with a new force even when such a proposition routinely ignores the extent of political evolution that has taken place, and which can form basis for a more mature polity in the future. Baburam Bhattarai has been thinking aloud about such a force, and while it sounds attractive at first, it is exactly the sort of argument demagogues have



often used to reverse democratic gains while consolidating their own power.

We have walked down that path twice in recent history and realised too late that exchanging democratic ideals for economic development will accord us neither. Let's not waste time discussing the alternatives to democracy anymore. The new force, if it arises, will have to operate within the democratic framework because it is, after all, the least bad form of government.

We are a country of minorities, straddled in a geo-politically sensitive region and democracy, however messy, is the best and perhaps the only hope for us. This is the lesson that we need to be constantly reminding ourselves of, as the world changes to accommodate dictatorships, hybrid regimes and pseudo democracies. With the emergence of China and the examples of Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam, it has become easier for the Rajapakshes in the region to claim legitimacy on the fringes of democracy.

There have been suggestions that poor countries with weak state capacities are more at risk of conflict and escalation after they achieve democracy. In which case, leaving young democracies vulnerable to external interventions and without internal strengthening

is a dangerous idea. Nepal's big neighbours say they both want stability in Nepal. They should know by now that a stable, democratic and left-alone Nepal is the best guarantor of their interests. Supporting anti-government elements, playing divide-and-rule and undermining an emerging democracy would

ultimately harm their own national interests.

If Nepal's leaders were listening to Mahathir closely, they would have heard him also say that leaders must have the national interest at heart, and not their personal gain. The new benchmark for democracy in the days to come will not be

procedure, but performance.

Instability cannot be an excuse for non-performance anymore and if we continue on this path there will be no progress, and no democracy to protect either. We are not at war anymore and those who waged it have run out of excuses. @rubeenaa

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Wasim Zaman, 65



News that among the nine people brutally slain by the Taliban at the Serena Hotel in Kabul on 20 March was Wasim Zaman came as a shock to the many friends the Bangladeshi

population expert had made in Nepal.

Zaman, 65, was the Central and South Asia head of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) based in Kathmandu

from 1999-2004 and was popular among officials and activists in the region, and his large Nepali and expat social circle in Kathmandu. After retiring from the UN, Zaman had joined the Kuala Lumpur-based International Council on Management of Population Programmes, and was on mission in Kabul to help the UNFPA Afghanistan Country Office with the agenda for the International Conference on Population and Development later this year in New York. Although he was a US citizen his death has got scant mention in the American media.

Thursday's attack came two weeks before Afghanistan's presidential election, and four of the dead were foreigners. An Afghan journalist with Agence France Presse, Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two small children

were among the others who were killed execution style by the assassins.


The Serena Hotel has several layers of security, but the clean-shaven gunmen smuggled tiny pistols in their socks and waited for the restaurant to fill up for a Afghan new year dinner before shooting people as they sat their tables.

Another Bangladeshi person was also among those killed. "My father loved Nepal," his daughter Fariyah Zaman said, "he became enamored of the mountains, the generosity and kindness of the Nepali people and my parents found a calm while living in Kathmandu, in their beautiful garden and going for long daily walks. One of the things he most looked forward to was going back to Nepal."

Wasim Zaman was planning to retire at the end of this year and devote more time to his family, especially his two-year-old granddaughter. His three daughters live in the US, while his wife Shamim is in Kuala Lumpur.

Zaman was in Kathmandu last year for a regional South Asian consultation to prepare for the UN's Special General Assembly on Population and Development later in 2014. In an interview while in Kathmandu Wasim expressed worries that funding for population activities in South Asia was drying up.

Before joining the UN, Zaman was a journalist with *Dhaka Television* and a correspondent for the *Bangladesh Observer*.

At a memorial in Kabul this week, one of his colleagues said: "Wasim showed exceptional kindness, generosity, was warm and caring nature towards each and every person...he had a deep interest in politics and a constructive spirit to take on tough issues and seek solutions. He had an amazing network well beyond what his work required with artists, historians, writers, politicians, world leaders and activists." 
Kunda Dixit

Nepal's recent history on pdf

The complete archive of 700 issues of *Nepali Times* on the Digital Himalaya website is a one-stop reference tool

MARK TURIN

The Digital Himalaya Project is a collection, storage and dissemination portal for scholarly content and research findings about the Himalayan region and was established in December 2000 in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge.

While the project began as a strategy for collecting and protecting the products of colonial-era ethnographic collections on the Himalaya for posterity and for access by heritage communities Digital Himalaya has now become a collaborative digital publishing environment, bringing a new collection online every month.

The website has grown from being a static homepage with occasional updates to a dynamic content delivery platform for over 40GB of archival census data, maps, films, audio recordings, photographs, journals and

scanned books. We have also witnessed dramatic changes in the profile of visitors to our site: from (overwhelmingly) members of European and American universities in the early years, to a well networked, global and digitally literate user community, in particular from South and Inner Asia.

Almost all of our digitisation and scanning is now conducted in Nepal and our funding no longer comes from national funding councils in the UK and USA, but through Web referrals and from individual or institutional donations around the world.


There appear to be two reasons for the high number of web visitors that we have from South Asia. First, many users in South Asia have leapfrogged in terms of their access to and the affordability of new technology, moving from dialup to broadband services in just a few years. A generation of 'born digital' young Indians, Nepalis, Bhutanese and Tibetans are now downloading and using our content.

Second, a consequence of the poor state of many university and public libraries in parts of Asia is that students and teachers often have limited access to print collections and catalogues—even of material that was originally published in their own country. Weather conditions detrimental to collections and under-resourced libraries combine to make free, online access as provided by Digital Himalaya particularly attractive to scholars based in the Himalayan region.

Digital Himalaya is now the online host (or co-host) for 40 journals, magazines and publications of Himalayan studies. Some publications are regular, others are occasional and poorly distributed, while a number are defunct or orphaned publications with a large collection of back issues.

We are particularly proud of our partnership with *Nepali Times* as Digital Himalaya boasts a complete back archive of each and every issue of this important English weekly since July 2000—the year

that both our archive and the paper were established. The *Nepali Times* collection of 700 issues is 2.5 GB in size, updated every Saturday morning, and housed on secure servers at the University of Cambridge. It is regularly accessed by an average of 300 visitors a day and has more users in Nepal than in all of Europe combined.

It's a pleasant surprise to discover that what started as an academic research project 14 years ago, has become a vast online portal for hosting and disseminating knowledge about the Himalayan region to a global and fast-growing user base. 

Mark Turin is an anthropologist, linguist and broadcaster. He is the Program Director of the Yale Himalaya Initiative and the Director of the Digital Himalaya Project.
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Feature Packed

Nepal can now enjoy the new Honda City 2014 car, as it has been launched here by distributor Syakar Trading. The vehicle comes with features like premium wrap-around tail lights, solid wing frame wind grille, electric sunroof and AC vents for rear passengers.



Lending support

Standard Chartered recently provided Teresa Academy, a school for children at risk, with 15 new computers. The bank has also supported the upgrade of a science laboratory in the school, which is run by Maiti Nepal.

Building blocks

Greenhill City has launched a new scheme, 'Badhcha Hai!'. The real estate company will keep the prices of its houses and property unchanged for a limited time period, despite the increase in value of other real estate in the area.



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MNepal is ready to provide financial services to both the unbanked and banked people of Nepal. The company has agreed to work together with France-based company eServGlobal, a mobile money platform vendor, which has more than 65 clients throughout the globe.



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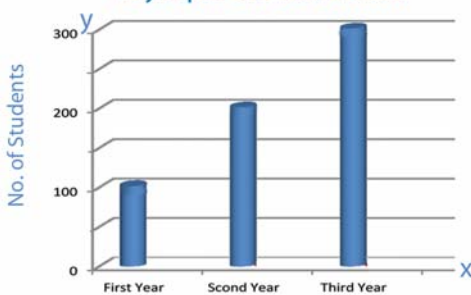
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SEEING THE LIGHT IN KHUMBU

KISHOR RIMAL
in DINGBOCHE

This tiny village in the lap of Mt Everest is just a tea stop for many trekkers on their way up to Base Camp. Few trekkers linger here to admire the stupendous view of Ama Dablam that towers above, and the rampart of the Nuptse-Lhotse ridge to the north.

Situated at 4400m and two days up from Namche, Dingboche's 24 lodges survive on income from passing trekkers. They need fuel for cooking, and since the dwarf junipers on the mountainsides are protected, they have to import kerosene or gas brought up on yak back all the way from the nearest roadhead in



KISHOR RIMAL

Salleri, seven day's trek down the valley.

By the time it gets up here, one litre of kerosene costs nearly \$3 and an LPG cylinder costs \$100. An average lodge uses up to 400 litres of kerosene a month. Dingboche residents already have solar lighting, but the question remains how to replace kerosene and gas for cooking?

The Khumbu Alpine

Conservation Council has signed an agreement with the Kathmandu-based Gham Power Nepal to rig up a micro solar grid to be run by a cooperative in Dingboche. The project is expected to cost about Rs 52.5 million and the locals are putting up 20 per cent up front. The rest will be a bank loan to be repaid in up to 10 years.

Karma Sherpa who owns

a lodge in Dingboche, says the affordability and availability of kerosene and gas is a make-or-break issue for his town's tourism-dependent economy. "Electricity for light is not an issue at all," he told us, "we need energy to cook and heat, and the price of that energy is crucial."

The proposal for Dingboche is a 130kW solar micro grid with a battery storage of 2,000 ampere hours that can power room heating, cooking, refrigerators and even computers in cyber cafes. The whole system will cost up to \$585,000 and local lodge owners are ready to put up 20 per cent of that amount and take out a loan to repay in 5-10 years.

Local resident Angchiri Sherpa is confident that this venture, besides making business sense, will also set an example for clean energy use in the Himalaya. "Burning kerosene and gas doesn't make much sense when global warming is melting these mountains," he adds, gesturing at the surrounding peaks.

The government subsidises

solar home lighting and micro hydro, but there is no policy on solar micro grids like the one being proposed for Dingboche. Says Sandeep Giri of Ghampower: "Instead of waiting for the government, the 23 lodge owners in Dingboche saw the possibility of generating their own electricity and improving their overall quality of life. We are proud and honoured to partner with them to make this sustainable solution feasible."

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That phase of spring rain that lasted a week till Thursday is tapering off. The reason for the thunderstorms and blizzards in high altitudes was water vapour in a westerly front that was pushed up by mountain convection. The unseasonably cold ambient temperature (only 23 degrees on Saturday) resulted in destructive hailstorms in central Nepal. Luckily the moisture content is not so high, and the maximum temperature over the weekend will return to more normal levels for this time of year. Expect mostly hazy sunshine.

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ALL PICS: GAURAVMAN SHERCHEN/ YAK ATTACK

The world has started noticing the endurance and stamina of Nepal's mountain bike racers

Nepali riders continued to dominate the Yak Attack mountain bike competition this year, in a feat comparable to the accomplishment of the Nepal cricket team at the World Cup.

This is not just because of home field advantage over the terrain, it is a result of years of hard work, dedication, and a passion unmet by anyone except elite professionals. The time is right to capitalise on the natural beauty of Nepal and the passion of these riders to create a new breed of world class athletes from Nepal.

Ajay Pandit Chhetri (*pic, above*) started biking only eight years ago with rudimentary equipment, working as a mechanic. Today, he is a well-travelled four-time National Champion, four-time Yak Attack winner, and victor of several races in the UK, where he spent two summers racing as a guest rider for the Torq Professional Mountain Bike team.

At 25, weighing less than 50 kg and barely 5 ft tall, Chhetri doesn't even look like a cyclist, yet he has achieved incredible wins. Unlike many Nepali sportspersons for whom mere participation is

YAK ATTACK 2014

considered success, Ajay brings home trophies after trophies.

Narayan Gopal Maharjan, last year's Yak Attack winner, who has also been on the podium multiple years and is the runner-up to Chhetri in the last two national championships (despite five flat tyres in 2013), is another young gun to watch. He comes from

a background in an embroidery company and martial arts and until five years ago, was on a Rs10,000 Indian bike. Now he races professionally for Team Recoil-Life in Nepal, and soon abroad. Last year, he raced for Singletrack Team, the only professional team in Nepal, and represented them in Malaysia where he qualified for the world championships. The 28-year-old has raced in South Africa, Bangladesh, China, Malaysia, Bhutan and India.

Aayman Tamang (21) and Roan Tamang (20), both ride for the new SingleTrack Team as well

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HONDA

The Power of Dreams

HONDA



Top, left, right: Participants at the start of the eighth edition of Yak Attack in Shivapuri. Riders faced one of the toughest descents in the race's history, with deep snow and ice all the way down to Kagbeni. Ajay Pandit Chhetri (centre), Yuki Ikeda (right), and Narayan Gopal Maharjan (left) finished first, second, and third respectively at this year's Yak Attack.



and also qualified for the World Championships in Malaysia with Aayman placing the highest in the qualifying race (Aayman 10th with Narayan 14th and Roan 15th). Aayman also finished 3rd in the 2013 Yak Attack, but had to withdraw in Manang this year due to illness. Roan finished 5th last year and 7th this year in a tougher field.

Raj Kumar Shrestha (25) has been on the podium in the national championships twice (2nd in 2012, 3rd in 2014) and despite a serious back injury last year began his resurgence by placing 4th in the 268 km, one-day race in Bhutan. This year he finished 5th in Yak Attack. The 4th place finisher in Yak Attack, Rajeev Rai (25), moved to Norway three years ago where he races for Team United Bakeries, the largest team in Norway.

Chhetri, Maharjan, Shrestha, and the Tamangs are headed to the World Championships for Marathon Distance Mountain Biking in South Africa in June, pending sponsorship. Chhetri, Maharjan, and Shrestha are also on their way to Taiwan to road race with Team Recoil for three weeks and have received multiple offers to race in Europe and North America.

Now is the time to support these riders, their growth over the past several years gives hope that they can become more than just footnotes in the upcoming World Championship and beyond. They specialise in longer races with more climbing, so the marathon distances and stage races suit their strengths, however with proper coaching and support, these riders have the potential to impress at the Rio Olympics in 2016 as well.

While the world of mountain biking has started taking notice it is now time for Nepal to step up and support their growth and take pride in their accomplishments. 🇳🇵

Yak Attack: Nepalis on Top

The eighth edition of the North Face Yak Attack held on 3 March once again proved to be a Nepali affair, with Nepali riders claiming six of the top 10 overall places, despite facing tough competition from luminary international riders.

This year the number of stages decreased to eight from previous years' 10. The result: an increased total mileage, more technical descents, increased average distance of over 50km and some of the tightest racing yet.

For the first time in the race's history, a foreigner, Yuki Ikeda from Japan, won the Day 1 stage. Chhetri threw the hammer down on Day 2, conquering the 86km from Trisuli Bajar to Gorkha, leaving Ikeda almost seven minutes behind. On Day 4, a 66km epic, with nearly 3000m of

climbing, ascending from Besi Sahar (700m) to Chame (2700m), Chhetri furthered the lead by eight minutes. Canadian national champion Cory Wallace, one of the feared contenders of the race was forced to pull out after suffering from stomach ailments.

At the race's penultimate stage at Thorong La, after a five km hike-a-bike to 5400m, the riders faced one of the toughest descents in the race's history, with deep snow and ice all the way down to Kagbeni.

In the final leg of the race, a 58km undulating descent from Kagbeni to Tatopani, Chhetri went all out to claim his throne, leaving his rivals behind by more than five minutes. Ikeda became the first international cyclist to finish 2nd in the race while Narayan Gopal Maharjan finished third.



Due to overwhelming response,
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Hot wheelers, #687
Race to the top, #665

EVENTS

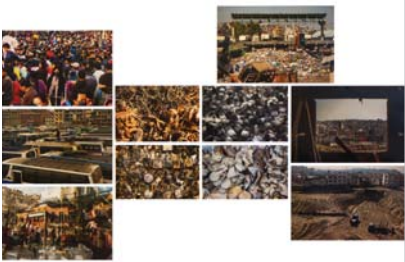


Himalayan Rush

bike, run, race around the Begnas Lake.
Rs 3,500/US\$ 50 for registration,
29 March, (01)4246534,
info@himalayanrush.com

Garden of life,

see the latest in floriculture at the 2nd
International Flower Expo.
Runs till 30 March, Bhrikuti Mandap,
10am to 5pm



Sustain KTM

a series of photographic narratives on
how we are coping with our growing city.
Runs till 30 March, 11am to 7pm, except
Tuesdays, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal

Film Lab,

learn film history, storytelling,
scriptwriting, cinematography, editing,
project handling and network with
professionals.
12 April to 15 May, Docskool, Gaurighat,
register at (01)4251335

Sundance festival,

a weekend of live music, great food,
camping, sauna, massage, and bungee.
29 to 30 March, The Last Resort,
Bhotekosi, (01)4700525

Street art at tings

catch the amazing work of Imagine Nation
artist Sneha Shrestha on display.
Runs till 4 April, 6 to 8pm,
Tings Tea Lounge, Lajimpat



T20 World Cup,

all the big boys play the shortest format
of cricket.
Runs till 6 April, airs on Star Sports 4



Man of letters,

writer Jagdish Rana in conversation with
Shekhar Kharel. 28 March, 4pm, Nepal
Bharat Library, New Road Gate, free entry



Ghode Jatra,

the Army performs its traditional parade
on Tundikhel to scare away demoness
Tundi who, according to myths,
lives below the ground and causes
earthquakes.
30 March, Tundikhel

Random impact,

an exhibition of contemporary arts and
performances as well.
5 to 18 April, Alliance Francaise, Teku

Strings for smiles,

a concert to raise funds to build a
community-run library in Dailekh.
Rs 150, 5 April, 1 to 4pm,
St Xavier's College, Maitighar

Ram Nawami,

celebrate the life and deeds of the Lord of
Satyayug. 8 March



DINING

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music after sundown. Lakeside, Pokhara

Natssul,

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Seoul's Hongdae district, this eatery
strives to be the best Korean restaurant in
town. Pokhara



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cooking stations, salad bar and a free
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lane, this restaurant has a menu with
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MUSIC



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Rs 300, 4 April, 7pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

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free entrance



Reggae night

get a load of jah music from Chari Amilo
Kala Samuha every weekend.
Rs 200, 28 March, 6pm onwards,
Base Camp, Jhamsikhel



Kathmandu on the run,

a Pink Floyd tribute concert.
Rs 350, 29 March, Purple Haze, Thamel

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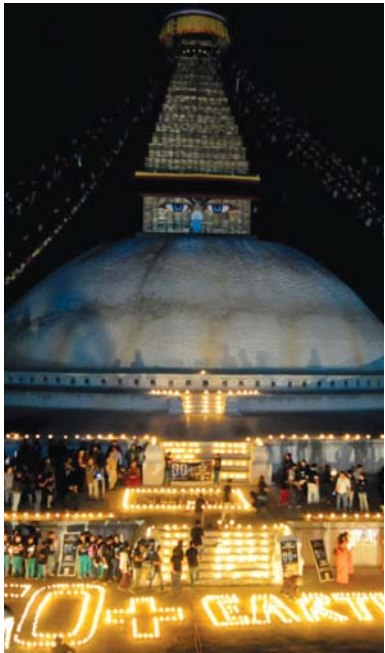
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EARTH HOUR

As participants in 135 countries across the world voluntarily turn off their lights for one hour, Nepal will have to do it with forced load-shedding. But it is not all darkness. At this year's Earth Hour, join thousands of youngsters, celebrities, government officials, corporate leaders and conservation partners to pledge support for environmentally sustainable action. Afterwards, there will be live music by Kutumba while contemporary painters create artwork on the spot and the ceremony will conclude with the lighting of 1,000 butter lamps.

Date: 29 March
Time: 6pm
Place: Swayambunath Temple

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AVAILABLE COLOURS



AWARDS





A still from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*

Many classic television shows have been premised on death, David Lynch's eternally riveting *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) being perhaps the most famous (and in this writer's opinion the best). Over the course of the last couple of years, international television has finally retaken up the mantle that they had left dusty for so many years



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

and started to produce some very watchable and in some cases quite stellar television shows. While some of these shows are not always based on murder (the excellent Danish political thriller *Borgen* (2010-present) being one of them) most are. Cary Joji Fukunaga's *True Detective* (2014), an eight-part series made for HBO being perhaps the most edifying of

MURDER ON TELEVISION

them in its auteur driven, stylised manner. As with most successful shows *True Detective* is grounded, you could even say defined, by place. Set in Louisiana, the show deals with the serial cult killings of young drifting girls and stars no less than Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson as two troubled homicide detectives who don't quite know their own limits. There have also been a slew of excellent shows out of Scandinavia - perhaps the most famous being the Danish *The Killing* (2007-2012) and now, also *The Bridge* (2011-present) coproduced by Swedish and Danish television networks. Both shows involve strong women detectives who are struggling with their careers (being female in a male dominated workforce) and their inner demons. While *The Killing* has spawned an inferior American version and *The Bridge* is about to be remade for

the American audience as well, thankfully discerning viewers still can access these far superior originals - if they so will. A few other quite compelling dramas have also come out of Great Britain, with the wonderful Gillian Anderson starring in *The Fall* (2013) as Stella Gibson yet another complicated female detective, and then there is *Broadchurch* (2013) with David Tennant (of deserved *Doctor Who* fame) teaming up with Olivia Colman to investigate the death of a young teenage boy who goes missing at the eponymous picturesque seaside town. Television has come a long way in the last decade in terms of quality programming, and while I admit that I rarely watch it, it would be an extraordinary lapse to turn up one's nose at these above mentioned shows. Viewers are more than welcome to indulge in histrionic (but addictive) shows like *Scandal* (which I admit I watch for the wonderful Kerry Washington) and the sickening *Grey's Anatomy* but be duly warned, there are truly well written, brilliantly cast shows out there that are worthy of your attention. If this current trend holds true then hopefully in the coming years television will become the platform for great writers to spin out longer story arcs with truly rounded characters - slowly but surely reeling in the best actors to realise that never boring genre that is the whodunit. 🇳🇵

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HAPPENINGS



LONG TIME: Army Chief Gaurav Shumsher Rana welcomes Prime Minister Sushil Koirala at Nepal Army headquarters at Bhadrakali on Monday.



SOUND AND FURY: Lightning flashes over Kirtipur during a pre-summer storm on Tuesday.



HOMEcoming: Supporters welcome the Nepali cricket team at Tribhuvan International Airport after the players returned from the ICC T20 World Cup in Bangladesh.



ONE ON ONE: Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in a Q&A with *Nepali Times* editor Kunda Dixit at the inauguration of the Nepal Business Conclave at Hyatt Regency Hotel on Sunday.

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TOH EE MING

Flickering candlelight casts a warm, intimate glow onto the 21 photographs that are hung like prayer flags along white strings at Siddhartha Art Gallery. A glowing blue light emanates from Italian-born artist Silvia Capiluppi's chest, as she sits serenely in front of a large metal basin.

Members of the audience carefully move forward to the centre, where she gently pours water over their hands. Four women chant in Bengali, their soft, murmuring

REVIEW voices forming a gently hypnotic chorus. Finally, Capiluppi picks up the damp photograph and hangs it up. In red and white stitching, the embroidered words read, "The Earth must be washed with clean water." Capiluppi thus tries to convey the urgency of conserving water through this highly spiritual, abstract performance. "We are born in water, our bodies are made of water. Clean water is the very essence of life itself,"

Precious water



explains Capiluppi.

The performance is part of the Balam Project that has been envisioned as a nomad art project for protection and healing. Climate change and pollution threatens the future of the Himalayas, which is one of the largest reservoirs of fresh water on the planet. So Capiluppi felt Nepal was the best place to kick start the Balam Project.

After her time on the small Greek island of Ios in August last year, Capiluppi made 21 self-portraits from a zoomorphic rock that bore a striking resemblance to the head of a Jaguar, Balam in ancient Mayan language. The 21 photographs of Balam Project were

embroidered in Kathmandu last year.

Symbols from Tibetan Buddhism have been painstakingly embroidered by Mumtaj Hussain from Nepal onto the photographs thus transforming the original works into collaborative pieces. The unique work used both hand and machine embroidery and they will be further embellished with hand-embroidery in various languages of the host countries that the Balam Project will travel to. By using varying religious symbols, she hopes her work will transcend cultures and convey the universal message to protect the planet Earth.

Capiluppi is content with using her art to push this environmental message forward. Says Capiluppi, "As long as you can create a small wave that moves, you can speak to the next person. Everybody can learn to value water, even in the small everyday things." 🇳🇵

Toh Ee Ming

Silvia Capiluppi
Kathmandu, March 24, 2014
www.ceop-aegis.org
www.futurewater.nl

Sometimes the best meals are to be had when you least expect it, and such was the case with the Urban Food outlet. We happened in on the one in Bluebird Mall in Thapathali and decided well, why ever not... let us have us some hot dogs. For what the Urban to Go Meals on Wheels outlets specialise in are wieners.

Opened about a year and a half ago, the Urban meat company produces a variety of processed meats and retails their products in most supermarkets in the valley. Its food carts in BlueBird Mall, Sherpa Mall, Naxal Bhathateni Supermarket and Namaste Supermarket are fast gaining popularity and draw a regular crowd of loyalists who keep returning, knowing that they will get a quality product at very reasonable prices.

The charm of a hot dog lies in its straightforwardness and simplicity- it is a sausage in a bun. And that is what we first sampled- Urban's Cassic Hot Dog (Rs 80). And here is the biggest compliment that the Urban hot dog is going to get- it actually tastes of the meat it is made of. None of that dry cardboardy slightly acrid sausage that most companies dole out, but a basic tasty moist frank. Encouraged we decided to get more adventurous and The Dog Father-I (Rs 200) followed. A frankische bratwurst with grilled onions and mayo and mustard is a grown up version of the humble dog and definitely one



that will keep one coming back for more. The Spicy Keema Dog (Rs 100) and the Monster Dog (Rs 150) both are designed keeping the Nepali palate in mind and come with lashings of capsicums, onions, meat and cheese. The Burrito Roll (Rs 120), though not a hot dog, is Urban's most widely demanded item tells us our server/chef/sausage authority all rolled into one. So we sampled it and understand its popularity. It tastes



URBAN

more like a kathi roll than anything Mexican but it is not a bad bet for a quick bite on the go.

They also serve the intriguing sounding Diet Momos, which when queried turn out to be the ubiquitous momos without the additional fat and lard added to it to make it juicier, thus making their version of the most loved Nepali snack much healthier.

The Urban food cart is well-maintained, and there is a visible attempt to keep it clean and hygienic. The staff are personable and friendly and answer all the questions inquisitive reviewers

throw at them. And then there is also the CEO's Special, at Rs 300 the most expensive dish on offer, that is playing its siren song on me, for not only is the bun stuffed with an oversized sausage but also grilled cheese and bacon...a dog such as that demands reverence and I'll be back at Urban to show it its due respect. 🇳🇵

Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Urban food carts can be found in BlueBird Mall, Sherpa Mall, Naxal Bhathateni Supermarket and Namaste Supermarket.



Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a Carlsberg

Too high, too fast



NEPAL ARMY

Around the end of February this year a tragic story unfolded near the pass at Thorong La (5,400m) that will sadly happen again if the awareness of altitude sickness is not highlighted for a new generation of Nepali trekkers. Seven young Nepalis from Birganj went trekking around



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

the Annapurna Circuit as a class reunion. Near the Pass, they were caught in a blizzard and one of them died, probably due to severe altitude sickness, while others suffered from extreme hypothermia and frostbite. Deaths from altitude sickness and hypothermia are almost always a 100 per cent preventable, which is why it is all the more tragic when someone young dies from it. With a motorable road now connecting Beshisahar (200m) in Lamjung to Chame (2,900m) in

Manang, an increasing number of Nepalis, many of them ill prepared for altitude, are hiking the Annapurna circuit. Unlike many tourists Nepalis approach high altitude travel in a more cavalier fashion, most will not have read up on altitude sickness, hypothermia, and preparation for different weather conditions. And then when tragedy strikes there is a “*ke garne*” or “*lau ja*” response, a typically fatalistic attitude that pervades our daily lives. Many young Nepali trekkers arrive by jeep to Chame in Manang from where they keep ascending by riding hired motorbikes to Manang at 3,500m and within four days of leaving Kathmandu or the plains, they attempt to go over Thorong La. This incredibly fast rate of ascent at altitude is clearly a strong risk factor for altitude sickness as it does not give the body enough time to acclimatise. We do not know the travel schedule or the ascent profile (how fast did they gain altitude?) or other details about the group of seven young Nepalis, and we sincerely hope that those undergoing treatment recover promptly. But attempting a

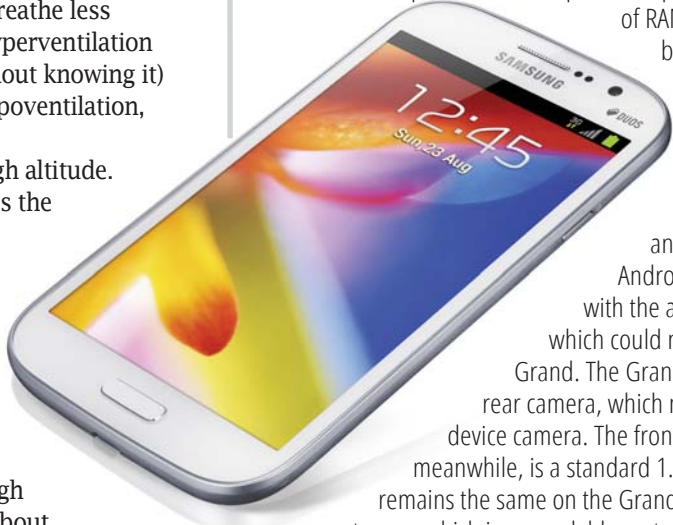
5,500m pass in four days from Kathmandu is dangerous for anyone, even for the Sherpas. It has also been reported that many Nepali trekkers are in a celebratory mood and drink alcohol just before the pass. Many lodge-owners along the terrain apparently prefer Nepalis to western tourists because the Nepalis rack up a huge ‘booze bill’. If altitude sickness is classically described as a ‘hangover’ (even without drinking alcohol) imagine then the effects of excessive alcohol drinking when you already may have symptoms of altitude sickness because of rapid ascent. Alcohol has another detrimental effect at altitude: it causes people to breathe less (hypoventilation). Hyperventilation (breathing more without knowing it) is the opposite of hypoventilation, is the cornerstone of acclimatisation at high altitude. So, anything that puts the brake on ventilation is potentially harmful and counterproductive for acclimatisation. Such knowledge is lacking amongst many young Nepalis climbing to high altitudes. A pdf file about travel to high altitude which Dr Maniraj Neupane of the Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal painstakingly translated into Nepali is freely available and very helpful. 🇳🇵

International Society of Mountain Medicine (ISMM)
www.ismm.org
Mountain Medicine Society of Nepal (MMSN)
www.mmsn.org.np
Himalayan Rescue
www.himalayanrescue.org

GIZMO by YANTRICK


Version 2.0

When Samsung launched Galaxy Grand in 2012, many of us who had been eyeing its Galaxy S4 and the Galaxy Note 3, two of the most coveted, most desired smart phones produced by this Korean tech giant, but notoriously out-of-reach for most, breathed a collective sigh of relief. This affordable cousin promised all the features of the two at half the price and smart phone lovers could not just buy it. In February Samsung dolled out the second iteration of the Galaxy Grand and the version 2.0 does not disappoint. Samsung has freshened up the Grand 2’s design as compared to the original Galaxy Grand, and design-wise the Galaxy Grand 2 looks superior than its predecessor. It is slender and has a taller frame. The rear of the Grand 2 now sports a fine-texture faux-leather stitching similar to the one found on the rear of the flagship Note 3 model, which lends the Grand 2 a quality, premium feel. The screen has also undergone an upgrade, size-wise and pixel-count wise. A bigger 5.25 inch screen now sits atop the Grand 2, up from 5 inches on the original Grand, while pixel count has increased from a lowly 187 pixels per inch (ppi) to a more detailed 280ppi, mainly owing to the 720 pixels x 1280 pixels screen on the Grand 2, up from 480x800, resulting in a brighter and more colorful content.




The new model’s engine has also undergone an upgrade. The Grand 2 now packs a 1.2GHz quad-core processor along with 1.5 GB of RAM, resulting in the Grand 2 being more than capable of handling high-resolution videos, and memory-intensive games and applications. Gliding through menus and home screens of the latest Android 4.3 version feels very slick, with the absence of any lag or stutter, which could not be said of the original Grand. The Grand 2 retains the 8-megapixel rear camera, which makes for a decent mobile device camera. The front-facing ‘selfie’ camera, meanwhile, is a standard 1.9 MP. Another spec. that remains the same on the Grand 2 is the 8 GB of on board storage, which is expandable upto 64GB via a microSD card. The model’s also kept the dual-SIM support for those who regularly need access to two different SIM-cards (which thanks to our telecom companies we all do). Battery capacity, however has been bumped from 2100mAh to 2600mAh to compensate for the better screen and upgraded innards, and to expertly manage the raft of features the Grand 2 packs, like Bluetooth 4.0, Wi-Fi, Wi-Fi Direct, Accelerometer, GPS, Proximity Sensor, Hall Sensor, and Light Sensor, among others. 🇳🇵

Yantrick’s Verdict: Retailing for Rs 37K, half that of the Grand 2’s more illustrious S4 and Note 3 cousins, the second Grand is packed with features and upgrades and caters to every need of an average smart phone user.

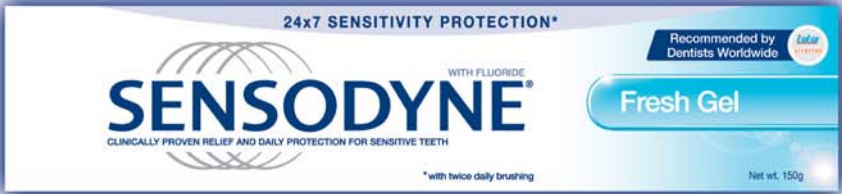


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Can Koirala deliver?

Depends on how much fire he still has in his belly

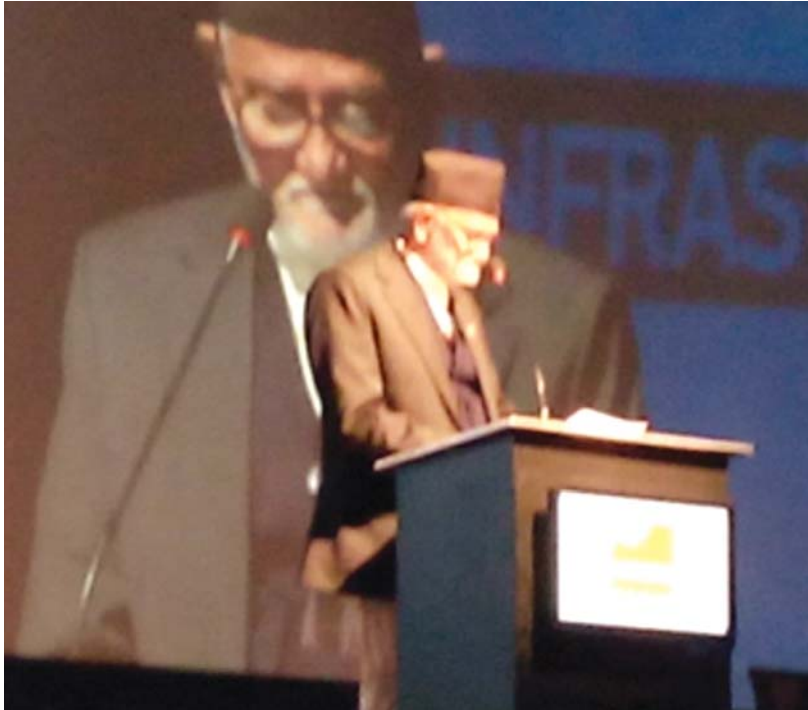
A lot has been made of Prime Minister Sushil Koirala's austerity and simple way of life. All true, and laudable. In a country where most politicians are seen as corrupt, selfish and hypocritical, this tendency to embrace an exception is understandable.



THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshi

But unqualified admiration is damaging to the very person who needs to lead the country in these challenging times. It also smacks of deliberate amnesia on the part of Koirala's legions of admirers across the country.

After all, Sushil Da was the star in the kitchen cabinet of his more illustrious cousin, Girija Prasad Koirala. Whether the senior Koirala was in or out of government, the current incumbent of Baluwatar was a permanent and, arguably the most important, lieutenant in GPK's inner circle. The two plotted together to neutralise opponents, mostly within the Nepali Congress itself. Since



KUNDA DIXIT

GPK had been such a dominant figure in Nepal's politics, Sushil Da was under the radar and went unnoticed.

This, however, is not about Koirala's past actions. It's about the present, about his style of functioning, and the delivery that has been sorely lacking. Four months since the Constituent Assembly election, not much has happened. And what do we mostly read, hear and see? How frugal Sushil Da is to have only three mobile phones.

Remember the fate of his last elected predecessor? The brouhaha over Baburam Bhattarai as Nepal's first PhD PM was tiresome, more so because the prime minister added to the adulation with one gimmick after another: travelling economy, riding a Mustang, monthly sleep overs. He thoroughly enjoyed the uncritical admiration by the initially fawning media and public at large before both turned hostile against him.

Although not even close to

matching Bhattarai's PR acumen, Team Koirala did try to make most of his double-digit transit hours at Bangkok airport on his way to Rangoon last month. There are areas where one can look for symbolism and austerity in a leader, but wasting time in transit is not one of them. Koirala does deserve credit for keeping his Burma BIMSTEC team small, in sharp contrast to the previous prime ministers who indulged jumbo junketeers.

The number of tasks that the government should have completed by now is growing. Vacant positions at the Supreme Court need to be filled immediately. There was already a massive backlog of cases even when the top court was in full strength. Now with 10 positions vacant, the people's agonising wait for justice has been further prolonged.

The National Human Rights Commission is headless. Appointments at the CIAA, Public Service Commission and ambassadorships are overdue. Most important is the sense that the government is not in control and cannot deliver.

PM Koirala must be aware of this. He cannot cite the excuse of unresolved peace process and compulsions of coalition politics. He chose to be prime minister knowing all this. Unless

Koirala suddenly displays great leadership – and that would be quite dramatic given his nature – he will join the list of prime ministers since 2008 Constituent Assembly election who started with a bang but went out with a whimper.

His tasks are cut out: ensuring minimum basic governance and service delivery, coupled with Constitution writing and holding local body elections. The political parties opposing local elections on flimsiest of excuses need only to read the multiple-point commitment they signed while foisting the Chief Justice-led technocrat government in March last year, as well as their election manifestos.

Can Koirala deliver? Depends on how much fire he has left in his belly. But he is uniquely suited to accomplish where his predecessors failed. There's no demonstrable ambition to accumulate wealth or compulsion to look the other way while the family plunders the state. He has tantalising promise, having already succeeded in curbing the ambition of his own clan. He now needs to show the steel that he occasionally demonstrates.

But stop giving him an easy pass. It will only divert attention from his serious lapses, and ultimately damage him. @damakant

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7 WONDERS OF NEPAL

Running out of ideas for treks this spring? Is there a motorable road now along the trail that you always wanted to hike on? Fear not, Nepal still has plenty of places on offer. On the occasion of the 700th issue of *Nepali Times* we bring you a list of seven new and old wonders of Nepal that are waiting to be re-discovered.



THE NEW ABC

If you assumed base camp trekking meant altitude sickness and sleeping on a moraine, think again. Once at the foot of Mt Api which at 7,132m is the westernmost mountain in the Nepal Himalaya, you will camp at the edge of a coniferous forest and wake up to see the sun rise to the sound of chirping birds and a gurgling brook. Distinctly off the beaten path, Api lies in the remotest and hardest-to-get-to parts of Nepal. On the trail to Api Base Camp, you will not meet hordes of Shangri-La hunters or piles of trash, but will instead see what Nepal used to be like before opening up to the outside world and trekking started to happen. And if you are a mountaineer and feel like climbing Mt Api, do it while the waiver on climbing fees to this remote peak still lasts.

Sunir Pandey

PULCHOKI TREK

There is a mistaken belief that trekking in Nepal is all about self-inflicted hardships in the remotest parts of the country. Not so. There are plenty of enjoyable hikes around Kathmandu Valley itself, like Shivapuri National Park and day hikes up to Nagarjun or Chandragiri. But if you want to avoid other tourists and rowdy picnickers, head for the southeastern rim of Kathmandu Valley. Take a jeep up to Lakuri and start walking south along the ridge. The heavily wooded summit of Pulchoki (3,100m) looms above you, and the sight of new highrises of Patan and Kathmandu can be seen below through the smog. To the east, the hills stretch out in shades of blue right up to the horizon. And Central Himalayan peaks from Dhaulagiri right up to Everest are arrayed to the north.

Pulchoki is a biodiversity treasure trove with more than a third of the 870 bird species, 200 types of butterflies and many plants that are endemic to Nepal. This trek is completely wild until you get down to the picturesque and prosperous villages of Rayale or Kusadevi of Kavre district where homestays are available. Our advice would be to do the six hour hike, and not be in a hurry to head back to the city. Stay up there in a Nepali village and imbibe the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the real Nepal.

Kunda Dixit



MOHARE DANDA TREK

After the old Pokhara-Jomsom-Muktinath trail was connected to the highway network, many predicted trekking along the world's deepest gorge between Dhaulagiri and Annapurna would be obsolete. Actually, it has opened up new areas made side valleys more accessible and brought the benefits of home stay tourism to the dwellers of remote villages.

Mohare Danda is the 'high road' alternative to the Ghorepani Trek, and follows an alternative trail up from Pokhara itself up to Banskharka, along to Nangi and Mohare. The treks are along scented forests of oak, rhododendron and spruce and sometimes along exposed ridges that offer exhilarating views of Dhaulagiri, Annapurna South dead ahead and the forked summit of Machapuchre to the east. You have a long circuit lasting a week to Dhankharka, or you can do a shorter five-day version fast-tracking through Tikot.

Mohare Danda Trek is an initiative of Magsaysay winner Mahabir Pun who has developed a unique concept of eco-trekking that benefits the environment and development of the area.

Kishor Rimal

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MANANG

Most guide books will tell you the Annapurna Circuit Trek requires no technical climbing skill. This is reassuring. Because, that's exactly what the three of us had: no technical skills especially to do the trek in the winter 'off season'.

At 5,000m, the legs hurt, the lungs gasp for air. It's 4:30 am, the temperature is -26 Celsius, and we have a final 500m to go. We make it to the pass and over to the Muktinath side, with thankfully not much wind.

The road has reached Chame from the Manang side and up to Muktinath from the Mustang side, and now it is possible to explore side valleys of the Marsyangdi, Nar and Phu, Gangapurna Glacier, Milarepa Cave and Pisang Peak. Take the alternative route down to Jomsom via Tilicho Lake and over the wild Meso Kanto Pass. All you have to do is make sure that you are well acclimatised. Manang airport has been recently upgraded, it has some of the best bakeries in Nepal and is a great place to just hang out. Linger in Manang, exploring one of Nepal's most scenic trans-Himalayan valleys. The great thing is that you don't need to be a professional photographer to take pictures here, even a mobile phone will do.

Prasanna KC



ILAM

The first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word Ilam is 'tea'. Indeed, the hills of Nepal's easternmost district bordering Darjeeling are draped in lush green tea gardens. Most Nepali movies produced in the 1990s had at least one mandatory romantic song filmed in these tea estates. The picturesque Kanyam tea estate still attracts hundreds of picnickers but this scenic district of the east has a lot more to offer than just tea gardens. Few people know that Ilam also has great hiking routes.

Ilam is home to Mai Pokhari, a listed wetland which spreads over 220 acres and is 13 km from the district capital. Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims from neighbouring districts and bordering Indian towns have been flocking to Mai Pokhari for years but most of them miss out on exploring the rich biodiversity. The lake is home to more than 300 species of birds and a major habitat for tree frog and Himalayan newt, found nowhere else in the world. If you prefer short hikes and treks, a five hour trek to Sadakpur from Ilam bajar offers spectacular view of Kanchanjunga, Jannu, Makalu and Everest. After a day's hiking, get into one of the cosy tea or thukpa shops in Ilam Bajar and sip on Ilam's orthodox tea or unorthodox tongba to set you in the frame of mind for another day of exploring.

Bhrikuti Rai

RARA LAKE

After a steep climb through a scented pine forest, suddenly through the curtain of lichen you see the sun flashing on the lake's ripples. On the pebbled shore of Rara, you soak in the sight of the inky blue water reflecting the snow mountains and sky beyond. Words fail you, and you are reduced to clichés: picturesque, magnificent, breath-taking.

Designated a national park in 1975, the lake is now home to three endemic species of trout found nowhere else in the world. Nearly 270 out of the 867 species of birds found in Nepal nest here and many more make a brief stopover before they head off north to lakes in Tibet. The pine, juniper and spruce forests contain rare medicinal herbs, and abound in musk deer, red panda and mountain goats.

Rara's serenity and splendour is so lovely it makes your heart ache to think how vulnerable it has become. With the road from Jumla already at the lake's eastern shore, conservationists fear the worst. Visitors too must go there before it turns into another 'Lakeside'.

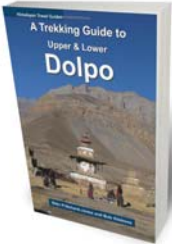
Kunda Dixit



DOLPO GUIDE

This vast expanse of the trans-Himalaya topographically lies on the Tibetan Plateau but happens to be in Nepal. This is what Tibet looked like before the Chinese or Buddhism got there.

Early explorer-writers like David L. Snellgrove (*Himalayan Pilgrimage*, 1956) and Peter Matthiessen (*The Snow Leopard*, 1973) introduced this remote corner of the planet to the outside world. *National Geographic* followed in 1986 with its pictorial coverage of the Crystal Mountain of Shey Gumpa, and then it was Eric Valli's Oscar-nominated documentary *Caravan* about the salt traders



A Trekking Guide to Upper & Lower Dolpo
Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons
Himalayan Map House, Kathmandu 2013
Rs 2,000

and their journey across the high passes of Dolpo. Now this remote region is no longer going to be remote with the upgrading of Jufal airport and the road from Jajarkot soon to reach Dunai. *A Trekking Guide to Upper & Lower Dolpo* is a new guidebook by Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons. Together, the two have written several books on trekking, including one on Manaslu and Tsum.

The guidebook offers trekkers options to Nepal's largest and most-sparsely populated district. You could literally spend months there, or you could rush through it all with a quick dash from Jufal to Phoksundo and back. One could traverse Dolpo from east to west from Myagdi across Kagmara Pass to Jumla. You could trek to Shey and cut across to Mustang, or you could take the Lower Dolpo Circuit and explore Tarap's monasteries. Imagine Mustang, but even more remote and exotic.

Kunda Dixit



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Ishwar Raj Dhakal, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 25 March

समाचारपत्र

The Australian High Commission in New Delhi has stopped processing visas of almost 2,000 prospective Nepali students and even wrote to Australian

universities to cancel applications. Students are suggested to get loans from Nabil Bank or SBI Bank for visa applications. But according to a source, Nepali education consultancies convinced prospective students to take loans from Kumari Bank, Prime Bank, NIC Bank, NIB Bank and Sanima Bank and that is where the applications violated visa requirements. Now the embassy is investigating all 2,000 cases

and some of these banks are suspected of issuing loans without properly evaluating property details. "The Australian High Commission informed us, universities, and even parents through email that it would stop issuing visas for the time being because of mistakes in visa applications," says Kumar Karki of Landmark Education Consultancy. The 2,000 Nepali students may lose the Rs 100,000 each of them paid as 'processing

fees'. Education consultancies charge Rs 10,000 for initiating applications and Rs 75,000 for visa and other processes. But Rajendra Baral, chairman of Educational Consultancy Association of Nepal, says Nepali banks fulfilled all requirements before issuing loans. "These are accusations, not facts," says Baral. "Students can get a full refund if banks are found to have made mistakes."

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It's just cricket

Pawan Acharya, *Setopati*, 24 March

सेतोपाटी



The Nepali cricket team's performance at the ICC World T20 Cup in Bangladesh last week won millions of hearts back home. Thousands of supporters thronged the airport last Friday to give a hero's welcome to the squad. Going by their

homecoming one would have thought Team Nepal had actually won the World Cup. After our wins against Afghanistan and Hong Kong, the government, the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) and the private sector announced cash prizes for the players. But this incentive alone isn't going to help. The focus needs to be on building a conducive environment and sound infrastructure which will bring out the best in the players. Among the participating countries in T20 World Cup, Nepal has the poorest infrastructure for the game. Despite that, the team registered two wins in the group stage. Although Nepal became an associate cricket team in 1996, there hasn't been much investment in physical infrastructure required for the game. The existing facilities will not help Nepal qualify for the next T20 World Cup or the One Day World Cup. Instead of lavishing cash prizes on players, let's improve the foundations of sports so we can produce more Paras Khadkas and Shakti Sherchens in the future. In the next nine months we will participate only in a single international tournament which is the ACC Premiere League in Malaysia. And if things work out, Nepal may participate in the 17th Asian Games. Captain Paras Khadka had said that success hides many aspects of the game but failure takes the veil off. Maybe we are also trying to hide our weakness with the over-rejoicing over the recent success. If Nepal's cricket continues to ignore players' demands for a better environment in exchange for few short-term gains then the quality of the game will be severely affected. To quote Paras Khadka: "We played our best. But to take the level of Nepali cricket higher we need better managers at CAN." There is no option but to start investing on players and place special emphasis on building infrastructure.



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asianpaints

More holy cows



NAVESH CHITRAKAR

Note: As a public service to the 550,000 students appearing for their SLC Exams this week, the ever-helpful Ass presents a sample answer for the English Compulsory Paper. Please credit this newspaper in the answer sheet otherwise students may be accused of plagiarism.

Q. Write an essay on a domesticated animal that you like the most. (25 marks)
A. The international animal I like mostly is Donkey. But domestic animal I like all most is our Cow. There are many holy cows in Nepal. One of them is our CIAA. The other is lying dead at the Tripureswor Roundabout because it ate 350 plastic bags. Kathmandu Metropolitan Council finally brought a big crane to remove it and dump it on the Bishnumati Vulture Party Palace.

This animal is mammal and full of many

uses for mankind and womankind. Cow is giving curd for eating, and turd for burning. Every thing cow does is useful: cow urine is healthy drink for some prime ministers. Cow patty is full of antibiotics, and bull shit is a nice disinfectant. Under cow are four udders, which is its most useful component.

Because it is holy, cows are also good for worshipping. One day in year we put marigold necklace on cow and pray for her long life. Cows love to eat marigold necklace, it is their favourite snack. They like the strings attached.

In Guy Jatra, we like to make fun of all holy cows. It is very funny day in Nepal. Nothing is sacred to us on this day. We can poke fun at everyone and everything, we can even call our principal a Cow. Sometimes, we can make funny pictures

about Prime Minister like drawing him in newspaper without any under wear, so you can see his private limited. In Rana days, Gai Jatra was allow because rulers want people to let off gas so pressure will not build up. Now-a-day, because of democracy every day is becoming just like Gai Jatra. Hahaha.

Kathmandu street is made for cows, because their favorite food is to eat rubbish. They like newspapers mostly because newspapers contain a lot of garbage which is good for their digestive system. But not goody for cows is eating non-veg food, this is why in England many cows are very mad. It is Nepal's good luck that cows here are strictly vegetarian and eat only plastic bags, so no cows mad here.

Another useful thing for cows to do is to become traffic islands. Cows in Kathmandu and Pokhara regulate traffic by sitting on middle of road and help traffic police by behaving like road divider. Without cow, traffic would be chaos. Kathmandu Metropolitan Council is employing many cows for this.

A boy cow is called Bull. He is very useful in our agro-culture society to pull hoe and for locomotion. Without bull, Tarai region will grind to halt. Nepalis like very much bullshit fuel because we can make fire from cow backside. According to RSS news report, many Nepali bulls today migrating illegally to Bangladesh via India they are being bartered for water buffalos which are edible here.

P.S. Dear examiner, hope you like my English Cow essay. If you don't pass me I will tell the Krantikari Union to beat up you.

The Ass



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