

A large, well-lit living room with a dark brown leather sofa and armchair. A glass coffee table with metal legs sits in front of the sofa, holding a red vase with orange flowers and a white vase with greenery. A patterned rug with red, blue, and yellow circles is on the floor. The room has large windows, a brick fireplace, and a framed abstract painting.



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2 Nepal and India have to decide what is in their mutual best interest. Nepal can reduce its overwhelming trade gap with India by partnering in water resources, and New Delhi must see that a more benevolent policy towards Nepal would be in its own long-term national interest.



PAGE 7



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'INDIA-OPEN'

At an informal gathering of Indian and Nepali officials, businessmen, diplomats and media earlier this week, the lights suddenly went off. No one seemed unduly perturbed, and in the darkness the hum of conversation continued undiminished as the guests waited for the generator to kick in.

Nepali and expat residents of Kathmandu have learnt to take the daily power outages in their stride, and have come to accept as a given the single most glaring example of the opportunity cost of Nepal's governance failure.

As we prepare for the visit of India's Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj on Friday to prepare the ground for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's arrival on 3 August, there is a tantalising prospect of a breakthrough in harnessing Nepal's enormous store of hydropower. This time, there are expectations in Kathmandu that the government of Narendra Modi in New Delhi will be more magnanimous in dealing with Nepal, and that asymmetrical negotiations will be a thing of the past.

However, the omens are not good. In the run-up to the first visit to Nepal by an Indian prime minister in 17 years, a leaked draft of a four-month-old Indian proposal for a framework agreement on bilateral cooperation in hydropower created a media-induced kerfuffle. Clauses in the draft urging hydropower generation and transmission projects with full or partial Indian investment to be speeded up (*see page 18*) were construed as a nefarious Indian design to capture Nepal's rivers.

We have re-read the English text and have concluded that either something was lost in translation by the Nepali language media, or this was another crude attempt to derail long-delayed bilateral partnership in Nepal's hydropower sector. If it is semantics, it can easily be fixed in negotiations by adding a strategic comma and the phrase 'third-country investors'.

Nepal-India relations need not be mired in such perennial paranoia. Enlightened self-interest starts from the



The Indian economy can unlock Nepal's potential for growth.

basic premise that people in India and Nepal will benefit from closer economic, cultural and political ties. Indian investment can kickstart Nepal's infrastructure and energy development, boost tourism, manufacturing and services to create jobs here.

Joint projects on Nepal's rivers, which contribute more than 70 per cent of the total annual flow of the Ganga, can have enormous benefits for both countries. By 2020, Nepal will need reservoir projects to meet peak domestic electricity demand, and these joint multi-purpose projects can have other benefits downstream in the Nepal Tarai and India. Exporting just 15,000 megawatts of electricity will offset Nepal's entire current trade deficit with India.

But this cooperation is only possible with mutual trust

based on fairness. Successive rulers in Kathmandu have kept up a level of suspicion about India for political advantage at home, mistaking India-bashing as nationalism. Nepali politicians and bureaucrats seem so convinced India is out to screw us that they'd rather allow trade talks to lapse or let our water flow uselessly to the sea.

To be sure, Indian agencies in Nepal often feed that stereotype of the Ugly Indian with high-handedness and arrogance. Past river agreements have been blatantly one-sided. Now, with the Modi government, there is a real chance that the Indian establishment will see a more benevolent policy towards Nepal to be in its own long-term national interest. A prosperous and stable Nepal will benefit India, a fragmented and feuding neighbour will be a chronic headache.

For Nepal to take advantage of this, we need to know what we want. Not just cricket academies and trauma centres, but national-scale infrastructure and energy projects that will allow the economy to leapfrog and make up for these lost decades.

Opposition politicians who lost the last election are already trying to whip up pseudo-nationalist sentiments to rabble-rouse, just as they are playing the ethnicity card on federalism to shore up their waning popularity. This is narrow-minded, short-sighted and self-destructive.

There are two ways to analyse the love-hate relations between India and Nepal. One is for us to keep seeing Nepal as being not just landlocked but 'India-locked'; to regard India as a domineering and dominating neighbour because of its sheer size.

The other way is for us not to remain India-locked, but be 'India-open' – a vast market of 1.3 billion people in our backyard to which we have access through an open border. We have to look at the Indian economy as a locomotive that can pull Nepal, and the Indians have to regard sustainable sharing of natural resources as the key to prosperity in both our lands.

YOUR SAY

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COMMISSIONS OF CONVENIENCE

Manjima's story brought tears to my eyes ('Commissions of convenience,' Trishna Rana, #716). For most of us including the government the individual stories of sufferings and torture have lost their impact through figures: 17,000 dead, 1000 missing. We have forgotten that these aren't just merely numbers, they were part of someone's family and community. The government should at the least treat the victims and their families with respect, hear their stories, and document them.

Aparna

I attended a program last week about the TRC bill and how it fails to be victim-centric. Two points really stuck with me from the discussions. A female victim at the meeting asked us just how long is she supposed to go from hotel to hotel, district to district, participating in conferences and conventions and expert panels when at the end of the day the government brings out a toothless bill and her calls for justice fall on deaf ears? The second point was made by a government official. He said none of the truth commissions that have been formed till date across the globe meet international standards. He seemed to be implying that it's okay if the Nepali Act is mediocre. But why do we set such low standards for ourselves? Why can't we strive for the best and be the first country to form a commission that exceeds everyone else's expectations?

Jai Sharma

Most war victims have been saying that their aim is not to put everyone behind bars and seem willing to come to a compromise as long as the state can ensure at the very minimum that those responsible for grave violations are not granted amnesty. On the surface this seems like a win-win situation, but under such a clause most lower level soldiers and rebels won't have to face much or any jail time; it's the big bosses who will get in trouble and here is where the entire transitional justice mechanism in Nepal comes to a grinding halt, every single time. Being brutally honest, I see this process lingering on until this generation of leaders, who have their hands soaked in blood, are phased out. Hope I am proved wrong for the sake of this wonderful country and its people.

Sarah D

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

The high death rate of the migrant workers must become an immediate concern for all stakeholders ('Blood, sweat and tears,' Damakant Jayshi, #716).

Anil Karki

What's new? This has been going on for a long time. Why does the government not take action against the culprits in Nepal and speak to the host country governments? Simple. It brings in a lot of money.

Samir Neupane

THE TRUTH ABOUT FACTS

Politicians and journalists rank as the two lowest of low professions in terms of morality in every opinion poll in the west. It's not surprising that they are in

bed together barring a few.

Common man

Most of the journalists try their utmost to hog the limelight. Which is why, some of them have stonewalled their calling by means of 'churnalism' and rhetorics. If you try to moralise journalism, folks shall take that as having high head attitude. As of right now, the social media such as twitter, facebook et al serve better to denounce the immediate malfeasance. Journalism is good at sounding out opinion of the mass by giving the factual truths without distorting the home truths. But absentmindedly, most journalists forget the ethics of unwritten 'Laxman rekha' of the fourth estate.

Whatever

WATERED DOWN

India's proposal is one-sided and humiliating ('Watered down', The Brief, 18 July). With its growing economic power and with a population over 1.2 billion, it is trying to secure its future electric power supply by bullying its neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan. However, Nepal as a country must not bow to the economic and political pressure from Delhi at any cost; instead Nepal must secure its border and strategise for its own power needs and growing population as a landlocked country with blessings of rivers and its potential for hydroelectricity production in the international market. It is our right to exploit our natural resources without any pressure from the outside.

DR

Diplomatic circles might have deduced the tacit message of Modi's first official visit to Bhutan after being

elected. Now, it is clear what Modi wants other members of the region to follow, Bhutan's path of being a pseudo-state and a satellite of the big brother of the region.

Binod Paudel

Please let the government have the brains and guts to say no!

Sujala Pant

MALE AND STALE

Your editorial ('Male and stale', #716) only mentions Janjatis and women as being excluded from the UML. How about Madhesi and Dalits?

Sas

The youth are also excluded. The longer it takes for political leaders to retire, the longer it'll take for newer generations to emerge. Youth in political parties who speak up for change are being held back by the old establishment that resists change and creates crippling dependency and linkages. It has become increasingly important for the youth to understand that unless political power is made more fluid, the current problem of their under-representation won't go away anytime soon. If this state of affairs continues, the current youth leadership won't get a chance at leadership positions till they themselves are old and need replacing.

Anil Karki

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

This is sooooo funny ('Signs of the times,' Ass, #716). Loved the new symbol for the Dash Maoists, especially the hammer-sickle-and-skull sign on the Molotov.

Rima

Times WHAT'S TRENDING



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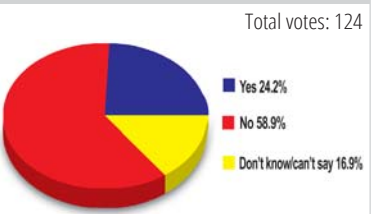
The truth about facts by Rubeena Mahato

Most visited online page
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Weekly Internet Poll #717

Q. Are you satisfied with the new Budget?



Weekly Internet Poll #718
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Q. What should Nepal's priority be in bilateral cooperation with India?



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Half truths, no justice

The government didn't even bother to send a representative for the funeral of the Dhanusha Five this week

Curious bystanders looked on as the ambulance carrying the boxed remains of the five young men made its way from the District Police Office to Devi Chok in Janakpur on Wednesday morning. For the families of the deceased, it was a moment they had been waiting with dread and grief for more than 10 years.



HERE WE GO
Trishna Rana

On 8 October 2003, eleven students including Sanjiv Kumar Karna (24), Durgesh Labh (23), Jitendra Jha (20), Pramod Narayan Mandal (19), and Shailendra Yadav (17) were arrested by the Joint Security Force at Devi Chok. While six men were later released, the five were never seen again. They were reportedly taken to the banks of the Kamala River in Godar of Dhanusha district and shot dead by the army.

In August 2010, a forensic team led by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) exhumed four bodies which were sent to Finland and the National Forensic Laboratory in Kathmandu for DNA testing. The skeleton of the fifth person was found in February 2011. Results confirmed that Karna, Labh, Jha, Mandal, and Yadav were the ones who were killed.

Families performed the last rites of their loved ones at Swargadari on Wednesday, providing them a much needed



ISHWAR CHANDRA JHA

sense of closure. Their struggle to find truth and seek justice has been long, grueling, and frustrating. Sanjiv's father Jai Kishor Labh, who was a lawyer, went from one government office to another looking for answers and kept up the fight until his last breath.

"The anguish of not knowing how and why his son was disappeared eventually took our father's life," said Mamata Karna,



Sanjiv's younger sister. "Our 59-year-old-mother is extremely frail, she refuses to eat, but is still carrying on the search for justice. Her only wish before she dies is to see the accused being prosecuted in court."

The NHRC says Sanjiv and his friends had been blindfolded and were shot by the army in a fake encounter. At the time of the murders, Chuda Bahadur

Shrestha was the chief of the regional police office, Kuber Singh Rana, former IGP of police was then SSP in Dhanusha, Rewati Raj Kafle was the CDO, and Major Anup Adhikari was in charge of the Dharapani Army Barrack. But the victims' families don't know why the men were targeted, and the alleged perpetrators have never been tried.

The NHRC's Bed Prasad Bhattarai is hopeful that those accused in the murder will be

ENDLESS GRIEF: Mother of Sanjiv Kumar Karna, one of the disappeared men, mourns at her son's funeral in Janakpur on Wednesday.

tried under criminal law.

"An investigation carried out by a constitutional body like the NHRC with the full involvement of the police and incriminating forensic evidence should put pressure on the government and speed up the process," Bhattarai said over the phone from Janakpur.

But the state's continued apathy does not give victims much reason for hope. The handing over of the remains in Janakpur this week was a watershed moment in Nepal's history, yet the government didn't bother to send a single representative from Kathmandu.

"The least the state could have done was to stand beside us, share our pain, and tell us that our brothers died for the good of this country. We didn't need an apology from their side," said Karna.

Earlier in the year, the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation appointed Chuda Bahadur Shrestha in a taskforce set up to provide recommendations for a truth and reconciliation bill, even after he had been named as one of the prime culprits in the Dhanusha case. The message the government seems to be sending to thousands of victims and their families is that their plight is simply not serious enough to warrant its attention.

While senior Maoist leaders Deb Gurung, Matrika Yadav, and Krishna Bahadur Mahara came to Janakpur to express their condolences and were quick to declare the five men martyrs, they cannot absolve themselves of responsibility because their party has repeatedly obstructed the path to justice. It was the Maoist government under Baburam Bhattarai which promoted Kuber Singh Rana to the head of Nepal Police in September 2012.

Bhattarai was protecting himself because if he had agreed to investigate the extra-judicial killings in Dhanusha, he would be obligated to prosecute those from his own party, such as Bal Krishna Dhungel, who have been accused of war crimes.

It is this complicity of the two former enemies in covering each other's backs that continues to hinder Nepal's transitional justice and has resulted in a TRC Bill with provisions of amnesty.

Said Mamata: "The case of my brother and his friends is clear cut so there is no need to wait for the TRC. There is ample proof, all we need is for those accused to be tried under criminal law as soon as possible." 🇳🇵

With additional reporting by Manik Jha and Ishwar Chandra Jha in Janakpur.

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Commissions of convenience, #716
Whereabouts unknown, #671
Finding the Dhanusha 5, #523

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flydubai launched a new promotional 'Visa-inclusive fare' last week. The round trip fare of Rs 34,000 from Kathmandu to Dubai is inclusive of all taxes and a 30-day visa for the UAE. Tickets are on sale until 7 Aug, and outbound travel from Kathmandu will be valid until 24 August and the entire journey must be completed by 31 August.

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Shoe-aholic

Saint G Leather Studio opened its first boutique store in Lajimpat this week. The store specialises in handcrafted leather shoes by Italian designers also has in store sandals, summer flats, wedges, pumps and heels as well as accessories. Saint G has also launched a special loyalty card with discounts on purchases, with up to 50% off to regular customers.

Real lucky

Real Juice handed over its KIA Picanto bumper prize to Rabindra Shakya on 15 July in Kathmandu. Binod Dhakal from Chitwan and Binita Regmi from Kathmandu won the 2nd and 3rd Monthly Prizes - an all expenses paid trip to Dubai for a couple. A



Cathay and Qatar win Skytrax

Cathay Pacific has been named the "World's Best Airline" in the annual Skytrax World Airline Awards, the fourth time it has done so. Qatar Airways has been recognised in three of the top awards at Skytrax, including winning World's



Best Business Class for the second year in a row. Qatar Airways was also voted runner-up in the Airline of the Year category. In total, Qatar Airways won three awards - World's Best

Business Class, which it has now won three times and two years consecutively; Best Airline in the Middle East for the eighth time; and Best Business Class Airline Lounge for the second time consecutively.

Sell and win

Qatar Airways has introduced a new scheme 'sell and win' in which all its IATA-member agents enter a special lucky draw on sale of Qatar Airways tickets. The scheme is on until 31 September and winners will be announced in October.



Summer shopping

Qatar Duty Free has announced a summer promotion which will run until 31 August for passengers departing from, or transiting through, the new Hamad International Airport (HIA) in Doha. The promotion includes a shopping voucher booklet comprising of \$5 off all purchases of \$10 and above in a single transaction.



Curved Samsung TV

The new Samsung Plaza at Durbar Marg was jointly inaugurated by B.K. Yoon, CEO and President of Samsung Electronics and Shekhar Golchha of Him Electronics, Nepal on 24 July. One of the main products featured during the inauguration was the new Samsung Curved UHD TV.

Promises to keep

The NC-UML coalition must stick to its self-imposed deadline of finishing the constitution by April

When the Seven Party Alliance led by Girija Koirala signed the 12-point agreement with the Maoists in New Delhi in 2005, he was taking a gamble. The



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

Congress and Communists were like oil and water. But there are no permanent enemies in politics, and the two parties ended up in the same interim government after the conflict ended. Both Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Koirala knew that they were in a partnership for peace.

Later, even when their alliance frayed due to clashing personal ambitions over who should be the first president of the republic, they were still united by a common political agenda to remove Gyanendra Shah from the throne.

As a democrat, it wasn't difficult for Koirala to be convinced that Nepal must become a secular republic. However, it was the 2007 Madhes movement that actually pushed him to the limit of his personal values when he was forced to agree to declare Nepal a Federal Secular Republic.

Until then, the 'autonomous ethnic region' declared by the Maoists during the conflict was more of a recruitment strategy than a political stance. Despite their rhetoric against Bahun-Chettri hegemony in state power, the comrades did not take up caste and ethnicity as an agenda per se. However, egged on by the sentiments of Janjatis, Dalits, Madhesis and women who together form the party's most ardent supporters, the Maoist leadership had no choice but to lead the demand for identity-based federalism. Hence, the groundwork was laid for a working unity between those seeking ethnic identity in the hills and those demanding regional identity in the Madhes.

They may not admit it now, but the NC and the UML couldn't hide their disinterest and disdain for the identity debate back then. They were more keen on getting the Maoists to surrender their arms and dismantle their

militia. Sushil Koirala and Jhala Nath Khanal deserved credit for putting positive pressure on the Maoists to hand over the cantonment keys and initiate the rehabilitation and integration process, even though it was the Maoists who were ultimately lauded for their democratic transition.

Two years later, during last year's election campaign in the Tarai, a NC candidate told me why the first CA had to be scuttled: "A constitution delivered by a Maoist government would have ruined the prospects of democratic parties in Nepal and abetted the Maoists in India."

It would be foolish to assume that the NC and UML can promulgate a constitution on their own this time. The NC-UML have simply swapped positions with the Maoist-Madhesis, and both have been under the illusion that they can bulldoze a statute by excluding other parties.

Of the outstanding issues, none is more divisive than that of identity as the basis of federalism. Luckily, we have not one but two State Restructuring Commission reports to guide us on the matter. In a political landscape dominated by conservative male Bahuns, one cannot expect the leaders to be thrilled at the idea of sharing state power with the hitherto marginalised.

But the fact that the parties in principle agree on the need to address demands for identity and inclusion is a positive sign.

The main disagreement is over the structure of federal states and their names. The commission report submitted by Madan Pariyar has suggested two states in Madhes. A separate report submitted by three members of the commission also suggests two states in the Madhes, excluding three districts in the east namely Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari and Kanchanpur in the west.

Some Commission members seemed concerned about the possibility of Kathmandu being paralysed due to

a shutdown in the Tarai, and others noted that the responsibility of choosing the names of provinces should be left to the state legislature.

These are fairly negotiable issues that can be resolved as long as there is a broader consensus on declaring the constitution at the earliest. Negotiations are about give and take, and a solution won't be hard to find if there is a spirit of compromise.

The return of Prime Minister Sushil Koirala from the US could finally inject a sense of urgency to the stalled debate in the CA. Koirala stepped into his cousin's shoes with the unfulfilled promise to deliver republican Nepal's first Constitution. The time has come to redeem that pledge. 🇳🇵



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Hogging it all

The government aims to spend a third of the annual budget, Rs 202 billion, on itself

Two Sundays ago the government for the first time in the last three years unveiled a full-fledged national budget. With a total allocation

growth, poverty alleviation and employment generation, and general socio-economic development.

Economic growth: Since May 2006, Nepal has spent much of its time sorting out internal housekeeping, which is yet to be finished. The main unfinished task is for the Constituent Assembly to write a new national Constitution. The time and the resources that this important but ultimately inward-facing work has consumed have started to have long-term consequences, one of which is that, in the face of general uncertainty, the average annual growth rate has been stuck

at about four per cent for the last 10 years.

Buoyed by the rise of the NEPSE since the new government came to power and last year's estimated growth of about 5.2 per cent, the Finance Minister wants to put in policies that help accelerate Nepal's annual growth at a rate higher than eight per cent till 2022 – the year by which Nepal plans to graduate from its Least Developed Country status.

But as we have seen from the days of the Panchayat, economic growth, which now means rise in both the standard and the quality of life, is not a matter of mere technocratic goal-setting alone. It means consistently lowering political obstacles, removing policy barriers and reducing administrative hurdles that stand on the path to growth.

At a time when even the relatively straightforward task of running electrical transmission lines across vast swathes of unoccupied hills and the Tarai gets mired in quarrels along ethnic, political and geographical lines for many months – as is the case in Sindhuli the mere act of setting up the goal post for growth gets only the ambition right, but falls short of coming to grips with the tangle of underlying problems.

Poverty alleviation: Put simply, poverty alleviation programs have two goals: raising incomes and reducing vulnerabilities. At the risk of

looking like a socialist plan, the budget has done a decent job in actively allocating funds to reduce the vulnerabilities of the marginalised ethnic and population groups such as the Chepangs, the Rauts and the elderly by providing cash transfers, subsidies and livelihood support. These policies are important for the poor to mitigate the shocks they routinely face.

But the budget seems to be unsure about how to raise the incomes of the poor. It hints at a number of recipes: infrastructure development, construction works, start-up funds, agriculture and irrigation works, and the like. Again, as past development experiences have shown, the software that runs these pieces hardware is still missing: a sound financial management, which can only be enforced by locally elected politicians who are publicly answerable. Else, with money given to the cadres of national political parties to do local development that generate jobs, the funds are likely be squandered on shoddy results.

Socio-economic development: Socio-economic development is one of the goals, but not the government's

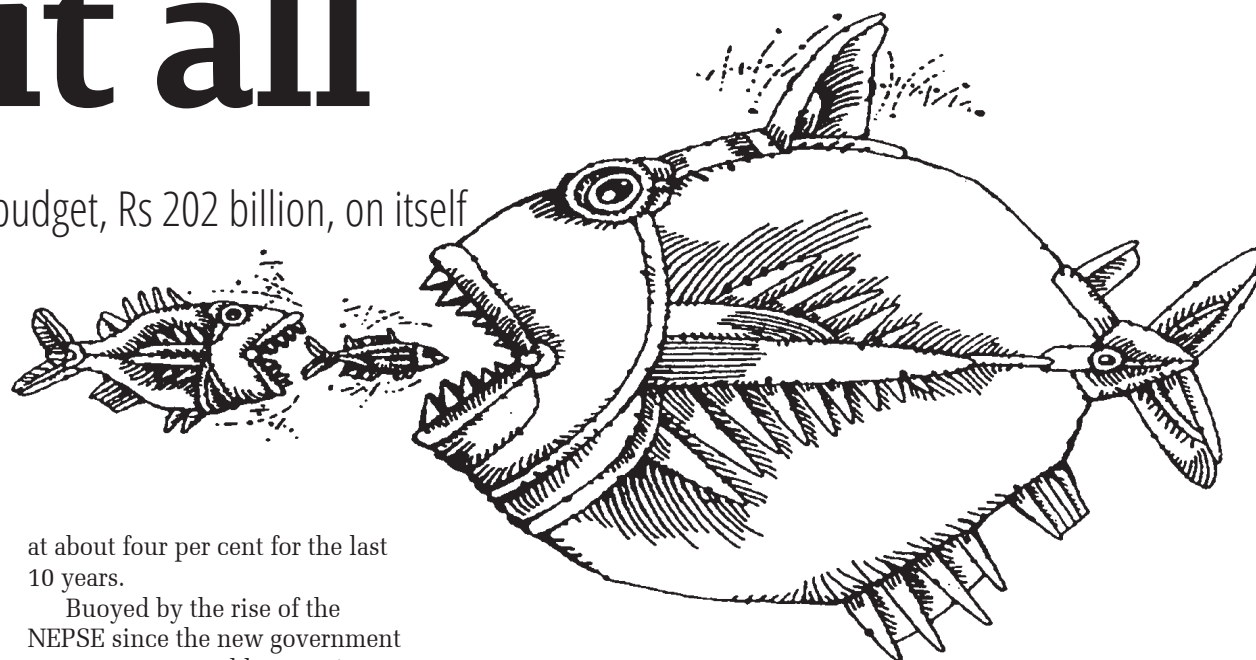
priority. In the budget, tourism development gets about Rs 2 billion, or 0.3 per cent of the total, while the government aims to spend one-third of the allocated funds or about Rs 202 billion on itself. This hogging of resources will continue to have two effects: national political parties and nationally active political cadres will have all the incentive to make deals with one another to be closer to the government for jobs, contracts and influence. This reduces their incentive to push for local elections and for a timely constitution.

Lofty rhetoric notwithstanding, looking ahead, expect more of the political horse-trading that goes hand in hand with incremental growth -- brought largely by the overlooked heroes of Nepal's development: overseas migrant labourers. 🇳🇵

Ashutosh Tiwari was till recently Nepal country representative at WaterAid. He returns to Nepali Times as a business and development columnist with this first of his new fortnightly column, Cross Cutting.

nepalitimes.com

Progress on hold, #714



CROSS CUTTING

Ashutosh Tiwari

of Rs 618 billion for the fiscal year 2014/15, the budget aimed to contribute to three broad development goals: economic



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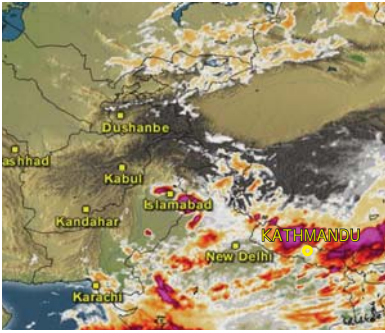
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The monsoon seems to have got second wind, as it were, after a late start. However, even though there are some intense showers, they are brief and localised thunderstorm-driven. The classic monsoon is relentless nationwide rain for days on end without thunder and lightning, which we are only getting now. This means the July precipitation is still 20 per cent below normal rates, and even scantier in the Tarai. Expect more intense squalls over the weekend, with overcast skies and passing showers mainly at night in Kathmandu.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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The Big Buddha

A team of Nepali craftsman build the world's biggest Padmasambhava statue in Bhutan

STÉPHANE HUËT

Raj Kumar Shakya is a characteristically humble Nepali artisan, but he has just done his country proud by building the world's largest Buddhist statue in Bhutan.

He is back in Nepal after five years in Lhuntche Dzong, Bhutan where he has been directing a team of 19 Nepalis, 30 Bengalis and eight Bhutanese to construct an 49m and 255 ton statue of the Buddhist guru, Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche.

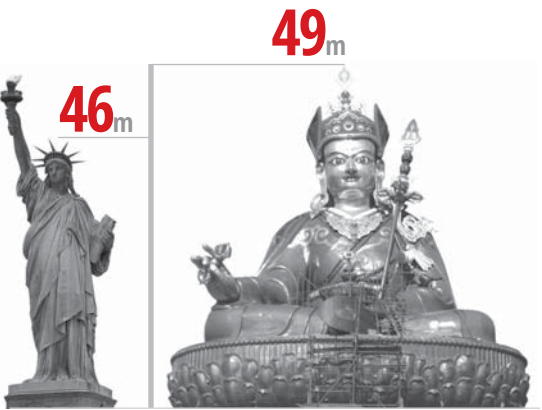
Padmasambhava attained enlightenment in a cave in Pharping on the outskirts of Kathmandu, and is said to have emerged around the 8th century in Bhutan, where he is referred to as the "second Buddha".

Khenpo Karpo, a Bhutanese lama, assigned this gigantic task to Shakya after meeting other craftworkers in Thailand, Burma and India.

"Khenpo Karpo chose me as project manager when he saw a 2m Bhairav mask I had made," recalled Shakya. "Although I hadn't worked on something that big before, I knew this would be good for me and for the reputation of Nepali craftwork."

When Shakya (*pictured, right*) finished the design of the statue in 2005, his Nepali team made an 3m high fibreglass model of the Padmasambhava figure. A Bhutanese engineer spent six months in Kathmandu, planning the metallic structures of the statue that was going to be raised on the Takilia Hill of Lhuntche Dzong.

Through the Druk Odiyana Foundation, Khenpo Karpo raised the Rs 43.4 million from devotees in Singapore, China and Taiwan. The 11.2m monastery on which the statue is located was erected in 2009. Finally, six years after meeting Khempo Karpo in Kathmandu, Shakya and his Nepali team finally arrived in Lhuntche



Dzong to start moulding the copper pieces.

Takilia Hill is in a remote area 500km east of Thimphu. Shakya's team faced frequent electricity shortages, delayed supplies of materials from India, lack of entertainment and sometimes even lack of food. But Shakya retains only the positive aspects of this experience: "After directing this construction, any other task will now seem easy to me. I learnt and experimented with new techniques."

The workers took a well-earned break every year in October, during which the Nepalis returned to Kathmandu to celebrate Dasain and Tihar. The project was finally finished after nearly four years, one year ahead of schedule.

The Padmasambhava of Takilia Hill has been crafted using a repoussé metalworking technique: the same used for the Statue of Liberty in New York. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com

See Video of construction

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18

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EVENTS



Headspin,

Take part in the ultimate B-boying competition in Nepal and compete with dancers from New Delhi and Mumbai to win Rs 25,000 in cash prizes. *Rs 250, 10 August, St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel*

Best clicks,

exhibition of winning and selected photos of IME-Global IME Bank Nepal Photo Contest 2014, *until 28 July, 10am to 5pm, Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, Kathmandu*



BFF,

Adopt a dog from Animal Nepal's shelter – the local mixed breeds are healthier and better adjusted to local conditions than pedigrees. *Rs 150, animalnepal.org, (01)5538068, 9841334537*

Muna Madan,

Nepal's favourite epic on stage again. Runs till *31 July. Rs 100/200/300/500. Rastriya Nachghar, Jamal.*

Impression,

An exhibition of the works of photographer Aakash Pradhan. *10am to 5pm, Café Mitini, Lajimpat, (01)4002070.*

Flagbearers,

Be one of 30,000 participants to form the largest human national flag and make it to the Guinness Book of World Records. *9 August, 6 to 9am, Tundikhel, Kathmandu.*



Charya Nritya,

Experience Kathmandu's version of dance meditation under the tutelage of Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and immerse yourself in nature, consciousness and compassion. *Rs 1,600, 1 to 14 September, 12.15pm, inneradventuretravel.com*

Amalgam,

A talk on 'spreading socio-political messages through art in the local community' at the ongoing exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery. *27 July, 3pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal*



Untied Women,

Come hear from fair trade producer Manushi on their work empowering women's lives through tie dye production. *1 to 14 August, Café & Shop Mitini, Lajimpat*

'Daze' exhibition,

Portrays the feeling moment of daily life in Nepal through a series of photographs showcased over dinner and drinks. Works by Lynda Gonzalez, Bri Griesinger and Katherine Primeau. *25 July, 7to 10pm, Pilgrim's Feed 'n' Read Restaurant and Bar, Thamel.*

Newa film festival,

support local filmmakers, skip the mall, and come enjoy an open-air film screening every evening for a week. *6 to 12 September. Janabahaa, Kel Tol, Kathmandu.*

Designing your future,

a workshop on goal setting. 26 July, 3.30 to 6pm, Alfa House Restro & Bar, New Baneshwor *www.eventsinnepal.com/event/designing-your-future-the-power-of-goal-setting#sthash.wRtlTkt9.dpuf*

DINING

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La Casita De Boudhanath,

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Fuji Baker,

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Grill Me,

If you're in the mood for nothing but meat, this place will let the carnivore in you rejoice. *Jhamsikhel.*

Weekend brunch,

beside the swimming pool and Jacuzzi at Hyatt Regency. Ideal way to end the week, with fun, food and friends. The Cafe, Hyatt Regency, *Saturdays 12.30pm to 4pm, until 3.30pm (Sundays), Rs 1800, (01)4491234*



Pack My Lunch,

There's nothing quite like a good home cooked meal delivered fresh to your office desk. *www.facebook.com/packmylunchnepal*

Olive Café,

A favourite place for breakfast and coffee in the morning sun. *Lakeside, Pokhara.*



Reggae Bar

Be spoilt for choice with an eclectic range of cocktails to choose from. If you're indecisive, have all of them. *Thamel.*



La Dolce Vita,

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House of Music,

For five days a week, this bar and restaurant is packed with musical events that include open mics, karaoke and jam sessions. Open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 4pm to 11pm, Amrit Marg, Thamel, 9851075172



Fusion Night,

Ninad with his fusion sound, 7pm onwards, 25 July, Places Restaurant & Bar, Thamel



Shastriya Sangeet,

The best of Hindustani classical every new moon night. 27 July 4pm onwards, Battisputali.

GETAWAYS

Jungle Safari Lodge

Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city and surround yourself with lush greenery in the middle of Chitwan National Park. Chitwan National Park, Sauraha.

Hotel Shambala

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Raniban Retreat

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NEPALI STEPS IN NORWAY

MARIT BAKKE
on Gaustadtoppen, Norway

Nima Nuru Sherpa (*pic, below*) guides the Ecuriel helicopter perilously close to the side of the mountain. With hand gestures to the pilot, he gets it to gingerly lower the cargo dangling from a rope to exactly where he wants it.

Nima Nuru could very well be on a helicopter rescue in the Himalaya in Nepal, but he is not. This summer he is with dozens of other Nepalis building new stone steps along a hiking trail to the top of Gaustadtoppen (1,883m), a three-hour drive west of Oslo.

The helicopter places the slab exactly where Nima Nuru wants it, then peels off diving down the slope to pick up another stone. Several hours later, there are enough slabs to keep Nima Nuru and his team busy for a couple of weeks on the trail.

The Sherpa team has been contracted by Tinn and Vinje municipalities each summer for the last four years to improve trekking trails, including the one at Gaustadtoppen. Nima is the group's veteran, this is his sixth

summer in Norway. Some of the Nepalis work on Himalayan expeditions, and this off-season work in Norway supplements their income. This is the second season for Dorjee and Bhala, the first for Purna. They all come from Khunde village in Khumbu, situated at 3,840 m.

For several years, Nepalis, including Nima, have been brought to Norway by a company run by Geirr Vetti. This summer, there are 29 Nepalis from Khumbu working in different parts of Norway staying sometimes for up to five months. Vetti first employed Nepalis to restore old stone houses, and has since branched out to repairing hiking trails including the one at the spectacular Prekestolen (Preacher's Chair) near Stavanger on the south-west coast.

The Nepalis are needed because there are hardly any Norwegians who have the traditional expertise of moving and laying big stone slabs by hand. Maybe the Nepalis will help revitalise this tradition on Gaustadtoppen and other sites in Norway. 🇳🇴

1



LET'S SCOOT OFF



Himalmedia is looking for Marketing Executives to augment the current sales team of its trend-setting products: *Nepali Times*, *Himal Khabarpatrika* and their online editions.

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Deadline: 10 July, 2014
Shortlisted candidates will be notified and called for interview.



2



3



4

STEPPING STONES

1-2 Nima Nuru Sherpa selects stone slabs which are carried up the slope dangling at the end of a rope below a Ecuriel helicopter.

3 The Nepalis working just below the tower on the summit of Gaustadtoppen, make it look easy to move a stone slab weighing almost one ton.

4 Old steps (*left*), and new ones (*right*) repaired by the Nepali workers.

5 From left: Purna Bahadur Magar, Dorjee Sherpa, Bhala Kaji Rai, Nima Nuru Sherpa.

6 The cone-like summit of Gaustadtoppen at 1,883m which offers a 360 degree view of the Norwegian countryside is a 3-hour drive from Oslo.



5



6



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The more beloved the book, the scarier it is to attempt a film adaptation. Perhaps the only way, for dedicated readers and lovers of cinema to reconcile themselves to this now inevitable trajectory is to both read the book and see the film keeping in mind that, yes, while the individual imagination will inevitably trump

THE FAULT IN OUR STARS



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

the cinematic version, the book and the film are two very different forms and must therefore not be measured, pardon the pun, via the same lens. *The Fault in Our Stars* is a beloved “young adults” novel written by John Green. Optioned by 20th Century Fox, the film version started shooting in 2013 and was just released to great acclaim and

astonishing success – it has made \$238 million to date, that with the modest budget of \$12 million. Thankfully, *The Fault in Our Stars* although unabashedly a love story, is more *The Hunger Games* than *Twilight*. Shailene Woodley, a very talented and immensely likeable young woman plays the smart, witty Hazel Grace Lancaster – a teenager possibly dying of cancer. As often happens in romantic comedies, our lovely heroine meets a charming young man named Augustus Waters (Ansel

Algert). Augustus (or Gus) is also a cancer survivor; the two meet at an infuriatingly banal cancer help group, and so begins a story that will break even the hardest of hearts. There is a reason to send your teenagers to watch this film (if the girls haven’t already sped into the theater armed with boxes of tissues, ready for catharsis). All too rarely are there good films that deal intelligently with teenage. For those of us who survived those angst ridden years relatively unscathed, we are grateful to see a normalised version of good decent kids who don’t run around being mean to each other and talking in some sort of horrifying teenage speak. Apparently not all teenagers type texts with unspeakable abbreviations, some even have grasp on punctuation (after all one must learn how to spell when one reaches college). But to stop being flippant for a moment, this film is rather more than just “good” mainly because it deals with the real substance of being that young. Most young people this age feel immortal; teenage is all about thinking that one is an adult, being omniscient, and living forever. Rarely has a mainstream film dealt with that kind of material with such delicacy. It also very possible that the film only really attains such depths due to the talent of Shailene Woodley- a young actress with a brain and an enormous heart. 🇳🇵

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Trailer



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HAPPENINGS



BACK HOME: Prime Minister Sushil Koirala returns to Nepal following his month-long lung cancer treatment in the United States on Tuesday.



BURNED DOWN: Firemen douse the fire at the BP Library in Tri-Chandra College on Sunday. The library was set ablaze following a clash between members of two student wings affiliated to Nepali Congress and CPN-UML.



SHIVA’S DISCIPLE: A Hindu devotee takes a holy bath before collecting water from the Bagmati river during the ‘Bol Bom’ pilgrimage at Sudarjial on Monday.



DONATE BLOOD: ACIWECClinic Travel Medicine Center in partnership with Nepal Red Cross Society organised a blood donation camp at its premises in Lainchaur on Wednesday.

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MAKEMOVIES 2013

CLARE HENNIG

Their heads tilted and fingers deftly manipulating the material, the dozen women focused intently on the work at hand. The orderly rows of worktables and constant hum of sewing machines almost gave the impression of a factory production line. But rather than a manager, a teacher looked on. The students are enrolled in the Social Enterprise Activation Center's design and sewing course and are here to learn income-generating skills.

"The women are used to working at home, but this is a way for them to earn money for themselves and support their families," said sewing teacher Amuda Shrestha (*pic, in grey*). "They need to learn these skills."

The white-washed, brightly-lit S.E.A. Centre in Lajimpat is a conglomerate of different small-scale businesses that aim to ensure fair trade, promote sustainable tourism and empower women through skill-based training.

Downstairs, there is a gift store selling merchandise from local producers and a coffee shop that offers barista-training as well as speciality coffees and cakes. On the second floor, the tourism company MAP Nepal organises homestays, cultural tours



BASILE EDWARD TEO

A STITCH IN TIME

and 'sustainable travel' packages. And on the top floor, disadvantaged women are taught employable skills in the Design and Sewing Academy.

Shrestha's three-month intensive

course includes sewing, design and pattern-making lessons. Her students come from disadvantaged families and undergo an intense selection process, with interviews and home visits, before being accepted to the course. This is to ensure that the women are willing and able to make the most of the opportunity, explained Shrestha.

"This week, I am teaching them how to make men's shirts," she said. "Next week, we'll do men's pants." At the end of the course, the students are able to make a variety of different garments.

Since the academy opened just over a


year ago, some 35 women have gone on to find jobs in tailor shops, earning up to

Rs 8,000 a month. Others have opened their own businesses. One former student, Prabisha Tamang, started a women's clothing boutique six months ago and now employs two other women as well.

"I already did the basic sewing course but now I want to learn the advanced one to improve my business," said 25-year-old Tamang, as she deftly stitched a seam. "I support my two children and family with the income from my shop."

Alice Park, the Design Academy and Mitili Shop Manager, explained that S.E.A.'s skills-based training are key to empowering women. "For a woman without skills, it is impossible to get a job other than cleaning — they have no chance," said Park. "But with skills and knowledge, they can earn for their family. And financial power changes a woman's position in the family and in society."

The centre was set up with the help of the Korean cooperation agency, KOICA, and has a strong focus on sustainability. Park came from Korea a month ago and said the long-term plan is to support the center as it grows and then hand the management over to Nepali staff.

She said: "Our goal is to make this centre more like a playground. People who are interested in social entrepreneurship can come here, use our space and our facilities, and start something of their own." 

www.seacenternepal.com

In the heart of Durbar Marg is a special little spot. The Old House is a beautifully renovated neo-colonial building that now houses an adventurous new restaurant dedicated to the art of French cooking.

The menu, designed and executed by Elise Wang, the passionate and talented Parisian consulting chef, follows the principals of gastronomic cooking which embrace respect for the customer and prioritisation of the quality of the food, concentrating particularly on using produce and ingredients that are organic, fresh, and locally sourced. Gastronomy is as much a philosophy as it is a way of cooking, developed for the ultimate foodies who want to know where their food is coming from — making sure everything they put in their mouth is ethically sound and promotes the livelihood of local farmers.

As we had reserved in advance (which is recommended) Elise had prepared the seven course tasting menu for us. As dish after dish emerged, each plate beautifully presented, we were told about the ingredients of each course by the attentive staff. All of the non-vegetarians praised the ostrich meat main course, sourced from a farm in Lumbini that the chef herself had visited in order to



The Old House

ensure the quality of the meat.

Elise's meticulously cooked and highly creative meals are complemented by her partner François Tossou's perfectly baked bread (his baguettes are now generally deemed to be the best in town) that can include delicious variations such as blue poppy seed bread and black olive bread.

While experimentation may not be for everyone — one must have a fine palate and an adventurous bent to truly appreciate the combinations of tastes — The Old House has the capacity to provide a few unforgettably original meals.


The intrepid Nepali owners

have astutely split the restaurant into two distinct sections, the outside bar and lounge area is verdant with hanging flower pots, beautiful natural light, and a view of the new City Museum of Kathmandu. Here you will only have access to the Tapas menu, which includes fresh panini (the salmon rillette is particularly good), cheese and charcuterie plates, and delightfully original cocktails such as a Cardamom-Lychee Martini or a Cucumber Mojito.

Inside, the elegant newly restored interior complete with an antique fireplace can seat up to 40 people. Here, the full menu

can vary weekly but to date serves items such as a shrimp vermicelli salad, trout ceviche, a re-visited version of dal bhaat with saffron potatoes, and pork belly ravioli. As Elise explains, true gastronomy involves changing the menu as often as 5 to 6 times a year, seasonally sourcing the best available yummy things.

The Old House is still ironing out minor glitches, but when it is officially done it will be one of the loveliest places in town to sit down, have a quiet drink in a gorgeous garden, and perhaps then, replete with good wine, fine coffee, and artisanal momos, the most gluttonous of us will

make that little move towards the restaurant proper to settle in for a wonderfully decadent multiple-course meal. 

Sophia Pandey

Prices range from between Rs. 500 for appetisers to Rs. 1100 for main courses.

How to get there: The Old House is located in Durbar Marg. (01)4250931



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GIZMO by YANTRICK

Wii good

In 2006, Nintendo captured the imagination of casual and serious gamers alike with its Wii gaming console, which boasted a fun and super-accessible game play, innovative game controllers, and an appealing price tag. The

Wii U seeks to follow in the well-lauded footsteps of its illustrious predecessor, and gain a foothold in the eighth-generation console war alongside heavyweights such as Sony's PlayStation 4 and Microsoft's Xbox One.

Similar in design to the original Wii, the Wii U's dimensions of 6.8in x 1.8in x 10.6in and weight of 1.5 kg equate to an inconspicuous gaming console in your living room, especially when compared to the behemoths that the PS4 and the Xbox One are. The console is powered by an IBM PowerPC 750-based three-core CPU, along with 2GB of RAM and an AMD Radeon High Definition GPU.

The Wii U's most important and innovative new feature is its chunky GamePad controller, a 6.2-inch touch screen tablet, with screen resolution of 854pixels x 480pixels, which feels solid to the look and touch, and most importantly, has a comfortable grip.

The screen on the GamePad controller is where the Wii U believes is its unique selling point, and it is easy to see why. Games use the second screen innovatively; games can be even played exclusively on the GamePad controller screen, without the need for for a tv. Setting up the Wii U is not tricky, and the straightforward and familiar Wii menu screen should have you whizzing through the interface in no time.



The original Wii faced criticism from some quarters for not supporting HD game play that the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 did. However, Nintendo looks to right that wrong with the Wii U. The Wii U boasts high-definition graphics to at least rival the PS4 and the Xbox One, but this is not where its strength lies, and Nintendo accepts that. But still, admiring everyone's favorite mustachioed plumber, Mario, bullying turtles in glorious high definition is a treat for the eyes.

Priced considerably lower than the PS4 and the Xbox 360 at upwards of the Rs 35K mark, the Wii U is available at gadget shops across the valley. 🇳🇵

Yantrick's Verdict: Boasting close to a 100 game titles, including legendary Nintendo games like Mario, Zelda and Sonic, the Wii U gaming console offers an innovative gaming experience for hours on end.

VERTIGO VS DIZZINESS

A 48-year-old man arrived at the clinic, complaining of dizziness and vertigo. The patient said that he would see the room spin and feel faint several times a day. These problems arose especially with certain head movements. The spinning, he said, could last from a few seconds to several minutes. In between these spells of vertigo, he felt fine. But he was worried that it might be a symptom of an oncoming stroke or a brain tumour.



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

The man was concerned enough that he had already been to see another medical practitioner for an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan of his brain to rule out the possibility of a tumour. The MRI was normal, reassuring the patient that a malignancy in the brain was not the root of his symptoms. The scan, however, did not reveal the cause of the problem. The patient still needed to find out what the ailment was and seek proper treatment for it. Even if it wasn't a serious medical problem, he said, it was still very anxiety-provoking.

He had no other medical problems. He tried to exercise daily and lead a healthy lifestyle. His physical examination was normal.

Dizziness is a common complaint, especially during the summer when people may be dehydrated due to excessive



sweating and inadequate fluid replenishment. Drinking enough liquids often cures this common cause of dizziness. In the summer, people are also more prone to diarrheal diseases. Diarrhea can compound the problem of dizziness. Feeling faint is a very common sensation for those suffering excessive diarrhea because of the decreased blood flow to the brain, due to fluid loss, especially when someone with severe diarrhea attempts to suddenly stand up after sitting or lying down.

As a precaution, those who feel dizzy while standing up from a lying down position need

to stand up gradually with support. This will allow time for an adequate amount of blood to reach the brain and can prevent a fall. Injuries after a fall will only further the problem. This is especially true for the elderly, who may fall down due to dizziness triggered by dehydration and sustain a fracture.

Dizziness, a sensation of lightheadedness, is different from vertigo. Vertigo, as in our patient's case, is often described as a sensation that the room is spinning. Fluid intake will not relieve the problem. People sometimes use these terms, dizziness and vertigo, interchangeably which can be misleading.

Our patient was suffering a common but alarming problem called benign positional vertigo (BPV). The name indicates that it is benign, not serious, which can be reassuring to the patient. It is a positional vertigo because turning the head to the right or left, tilting the head to look upward, or lying down can often bring on the sensation of the room spinning. The pathology lies in the labyrinth, the passage, inside the ears. The labyrinth of the ear is responsible for processing information with regards to position and movement. The displacement of calcium carbonate crystals inside the ear causes BPV. The 'Epley maneuver' can reposition the crystals to their normal position and help the patient. After the diagnosis of BPV, health care professionals can carry out this simple procedure in the examining room and provide great relief to the patient. 🇳🇵

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NO MORE MONSOON BALD PATCHES

On average, we lose 50-60 strands of hair a day without any perceivable change to our glossy locks. During the monsoon season, however, the increased humidity and harsher weather conditions can easily triple the amount of hair that falls out daily. But do not despair – there are solutions to prevent the woes of hair loss when the rain begins to fall.



1

Try to keep your hair dry. Hair is more fragile when it is wet and breaks much more easily. Wear a hat, bring an umbrella, whatever it takes to not look as though you just stepped out of the shower when you leave the house.

2

Avoid brushing wet hair. This goes for both when you are unexpectedly caught in the rain and after bathing. Gently towel-dry your hair and wait until it has dried thoroughly before styling it. This will help prevent breakage and hairs being unnecessarily yanked out.



3

Use the appropriate tools and techniques. Wide-toothed combs are better for detangling knots, paddle-brushes cause less static. Also, work your way from the bottom to the top of your hair as you remove tangles – starting at the ends rather than at the scalp.

4



You are what you eat. An adequate and balanced diet will stimulate hair growth and lead to an overall healthier mane. Be sure to eat enough protein and dark leafy vegetables, and drink plenty of water.

5

Itchy, flaky scalp? You could be experiencing dandruff, which is often provoked by an increase in humidity. Use an anti-dandruff shampoo and leave the styling products aside, they will only aggravate the problem.



Monsoon brings with itself a set of problems that's torturous for all hair types. The wet and humid weather is harsh on your hair and is the root cause for the limpness, frizziness, and dullness of your hair during the season. The best and the simplest way to combat the nightmare that monsoon is for your hair is to use a conditioner.

Conditioners contain nutrients which act as damage therapy to keep your hair soft and frizz-free. When hair is moisturised in a proper way, it will have a healthy glow to it and feels smooth and gentle.

However, it's good to know what type of conditioner suits your hair type. There are various types of conditioners available

– Daily shine, hair fall, intense repair and oil care.

Regular conditioner works on the surface of the hair – coating, moisturising and protecting the cuticles. It gives the hair sheen, reduces static and makes it much easier to manage. After shampooing, incorporate a regular conditioner as a part of your daily hair washing routine.

Deep conditioners are more intense than regular ones and are usually of a thicker consistency. They relax, nourish and protect the hair on a much deeper level. When using deep conditioners, let it rest for at least 15 minutes after application in order to let the nutrients soak into the inner layers of your hair.

Apply conditioner liberally to your hair, starting an inch or two away from the roots. Pay special attention to the ends as they tend to dry out the most. Never apply conditioner to the roots, where natural hair oils are already maintained.

Twice a month, swap your regular conditioner for a deep conditioner to give your hair an extra boost of nourishment.

Make sure to choose a product that suits your hair type. For oily hair, mild conditioners specifically meant for oily hair types are easy to find. Conditioners of normal strength might cause oily hair instead to look greasy. On the other hand, individuals with dry hair can make use of deep conditioner

treatments more regularly.

If your hair has been coloured often, or is damaged, weak or brittle, protein treatments will help to restore and strengthen its elasticity. Protein treatments are a special type of deep conditioners that help add protein to the hair cortex, which helps to repair damaged hair.

However, as easy as it is to be carried away with treatments, remember to do all of it in moderation. Too much of it will hurt rather than heal your hair.

So don't fret the wet weather. Just a few minutes spent conditioning your hair every day will add an invaluable shine to this gloomy season.



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Over-harvesting yarsagumba



BACHHU BK
in BAJHANG

On the slopes of Mt Saipal, Nepal’s western most Himalayan peak, 14-year-old Ramita Bohara is scouring the meadows at 4,200 m looking for yarsagumba. The fungus that grows on an underground caterpillar has a tell-tale little spike coming out of the grass, and it takes an expert to spot it. Ramita is getting pretty good at finding them, and this season

picked 35 yarsa from which she earned 17,500 – enough to pay her school fees back home in Bajhang’s Rilu village. “If I find more, I will buy a set of clothes for my mother,” Ramita says. Although it is a fortune for the subsistence farmers of northwestern Nepal, the same yarsa will fetch up to 20 times the price by the time it is sold on a street-front store in Shanghai as a ‘Himalayan viagra’ potion. Every spring the villages of northwestern Nepal empty as more than 150,000 villagers head off to the high slopes in search of this cash crop. Last

month, 25,000 people from Darchula, 30,000 from Bajhang, 43,000 from Dolpa and 20,000 from Mugu were involved in yarsa harvesting. In Dolpo, two people were killed when police intervened to settle a dispute between locals and yarsa pickers. From these four districts alone, the state earned Rs 15.6 million in tax revenue, and farmers are estimated to have earned Rs 2.9 billion. That is just through official channels, and represents only half the total yarsa smuggled directly to China. The bonanza has lifted living standards in Nepal’s

poorest and remotest districts. However, over-harvesting and improper picking has meant that yarsa pickings this year were slim in some areas. While some people carefully pick the yarsa out of the ground, others scoop them out with gardening hoes which destroys the next year’s crop. Experts say training on sustainable harvesting and storing techniques are needed in the yarsa camps. Says Bajhang District Forest Officer, Ramesh Chand: “At the rate the yarsa is being harvested, it is just not sustainable, the caterpillar could become extinct in the near future.”

GOLDEN HARVEST

Official harvest of yarsagumba in four northwestern districts increased dramatically. But these figures represent only half the total yarsa picked.

	2011-12	2013-14
Darchula	682	750
Bajhang	366	408
Dolpa	282	315
Mugu	0.6	33.4
In kg		

PRICE OF ONE KG OF YARSAGUMBA (IN NEPAL)

Rs 1.9 million in 2011-13

Rs 2.4 million in 2013-14



HIMALAYAN GINSENG

Adding value to yarsagumba and regulating it may help Nepal profit more equitably from the trade

BISHWO PAUDEL

Every summer, hundreds of families living in the Nepal Himalaya make the difficult journey to higher reaches of the mountains, risking their lives in search of yarsagumba. The prized caterpillar fungus, reputed to have aphrodisiac properties, is a popular gift in China and can sell for as much


as Rs 10 million per kilo in Shanghai. Chinese athletes who break world records are known to follow yarsa-based diets. Yarsa is also added to cigarettes and whiskey in China. The yarsa trade can be lucrative, but increased competition for crops has made the job riskier. In June this year, two pickers were killed and dozens injured during a Yarsa dispute in Dho-Tarap VDC, Dolpa. Seven

people from Gorkha were killed by locals in Manang in 2009 after a similar dispute. In the absence of a regulatory body, such disputes are bound to become more common in future. Trade will falter altogether if yarsa picking remains unregulated. Setting up a Yarsagumba Authority may give the trade a corporate structure that will benefit all stakeholders - the government,

investors, and locals. It will regulate the harvest, storage and trade and curb smuggling. Guidelines could be set for yarsa pickers and the authority could reserve the right to control the entry of businesses into the trade. Permission to collect, process, and sell yarsa should be given to financially stable and clean businesses with sound knowledge of the market, and on the condition that they allocate shares to locals. Locals have the first right to the natural resources in their area but, at the moment, the strong and cunning monopolise the benefits. In houses with no young men, only old or ailing residents, yarsa hasn't brought in a single rupee. Regulating the trade can spread the benefits more equitably. As per last year's financial reports, business from yarsa was worth more than revenue from all others Himalayan herbs combined. A few Nepali businesses sell yarsa directly to Chinese customers, via the online shopping site Alibaba. But a large portion of the market, such as yarsa-based dietary supplements, remains untapped. The authority can allow more access to the yarsa market by granting permission to businesses willing to open herbal processing plants that meet international standards in the same way that Korean companies add value to ginseng. Nepali companies should also take the initiative to open stores in China's major cities, reaching



PICKY PEOPLE: Bajhang villager looking for yarsagumba on the slopes of Mt Saipal in northwestern Nepal at 4,200m (bottom left), while in Lhasa there are stores that specialise in the item (below).

directly to the customers and thereby cutting out losses to middlemen. The 'Made in the Himalaya' tag already gives Nepali yarsagumba a branding edge over others. We just need to market it better.  Bishwo Poudel is an economist and teaches at Kathmandu University.



[nepalitimes.com](#)

Yarsa-land, #559
One day in the life of Mingmar, #672
Gold rush in Dolpa, #151

Watch Dipendra Bhandari's documentary, *Journey to Yarsa*



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Watered down

Bikas Thapa in *Annapurna Post*, 18 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Nepal has received from India a proposal on joint development of hydropower, the ratification of which would put Nepal’s water resources in its southern neighbour’s control. According to Clauses 3 and 3a of the new proposal, only companies okayed by India would get to invest in hydro projects, Nepal itself would only be permitted to invest in partnership with India, and third-country investment would be disallowed.

Last week, Energy Minister Radha Gyawali called water resource experts and former water and energy ministers to discuss the possible effects of this proposal on Nepal. Former Water Resource Minister Laxman Prasad Ghimire of the NC told her India’s proposal was “an insult to Nepal”.

In 2010, Nepal had sent India a proposal titled ‘Cross-border Interconnection for Electric Power Trade’ which sought to define the ways in which Nepal and India might trade power generated from hydroelectric projects developed by various investors in Nepal.

Succeeding governments have since been waiting for a reply. But according to Former Minister for

Water Resources Ghimire, India’s late and unprecedented reply is a disguised attempt to capture Nepal’s resources.

“For starters, they haven’t even acknowledged the fact that our government sent them an official proposal,” said Ghimire. “Their own proposal completely ignores the principles and possibilities of mutual benefits. Instead, they are trying to do to us what they’ve done in Bhutan.”

The controversial document is now being analysed by Ministry of Energy, but it hasn’t alerted other line ministries like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Finance Ministry about its content.

Minister Gyawali says budget preparations, UML general convention, and the Prime Minister Sushil Koirala’s treatment have distracted discussion and decision on the subject. But she refused to make the contents of the document public. “All decisions will be taken through diplomatic channels,” she told *Annapurna Post* on Thursday.

Politicians and bureaucrats have been looking forward to changes in the way India perceives Nepal with Narendra Modi’s premiership. But a participant in the meeting told us: “This proposal shows that the mindset of the Indian bureaucracy towards Nepal has not changed.”



BEING LILAMANI POUDEL

Kiran Bhandari in *Setopati.com*, 21 July

सेतोपाटी

Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam is leading a group of his Cabinet colleagues from the Nepali Congress and is using Prime Minister Sushil Koirala’s absence from Kathmandu to try to oust Chief Secretary Lilamani Poudel.

Information Minister Minendra Rijal, Minister Prakash Man Singh and Finance Minister Ramsharan Mahat are said to support Gautam in an attempt to sideline Poudel and were persistently pressuring Koirala while he was in New York. The two vying for Poudel’s job are Industries Secretary Krishna Gyawali and Finance Secretary Yubaraj Bhusal. Poudel was appointed two years ago and still has one more year to go in his job.

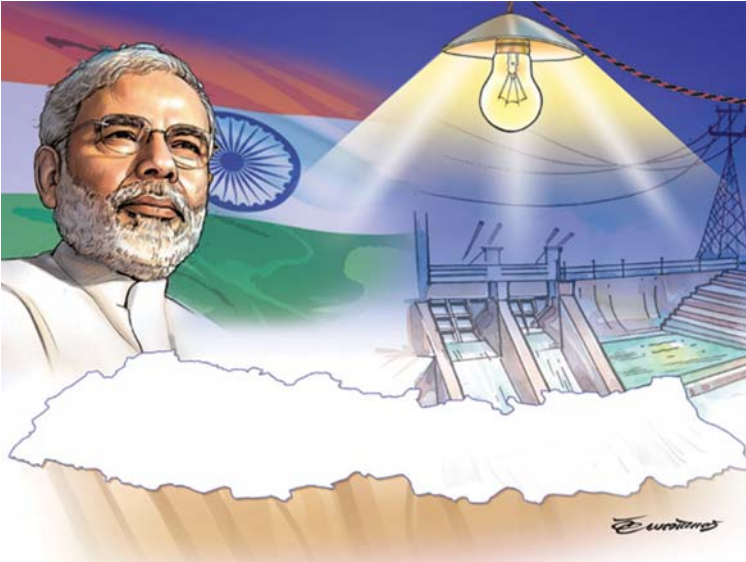
Although Gautam and the NC ministers have wanted to replace Poudel ever since the formation of the coalition government six months ago, the UML has stood by him. The reason for Gautam’s aversion to the Chief Secretary is because of his perception that Poudel did not support his shuffle of police AIGs.

Said one secretary: “The Chief Secretary takes a tough stance on just about every proposal discussed in the Cabinet. His professional integrity, decisiveness, knowledge and diligence are the very characters that have made him unpopular.”

After being stung by the media uproar over his transfer of Kathmandu SP Kharel, Gautam doesn’t want to take the flak for removing Poudel and wants to pin the blame on the NC. Yubaraj Bhusal is NC acting Chairman Ram Chandra Poudel’s in-law and most NC minister as well as Gautam are said to have a soft corner for him as Chief Secretary. Finance Minister Mahat is said to favour Krishna Gyawali.

Whoever gets the post, it is clear that the politicisation of Poudel’s removal will undermine the bureaucracy. What has protected Poudel so far is his image of integrity and being a do-er, who has got his hands and feet dirty in the Bagmati cleaning campaign, in abolishing the bus cartel in Jomsom, in ensuring quality health care, in the conservation of the Chure and dozens of other public service initiatives. No minister wants to be blamed for the protests that his ouster will unleash.

Poudel has served under Baburam Bhattarai and Khilraj Regmi, and has demonstrated that he is an honest and efficient manager. Some Congress supporters accuse Poudel of being pro-Maoist, but there is no proof of that. After serving in tourism, communication, home ministries, in the NEA and after being appointed Chief Secretary Poudel didn’t just twiddle his thumbs and complain. He tried to get things done.



कान्तिपुर

Krishna Gopal in *Kantipur*, 24 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“If there isn’t going to be an agreement on anything, what is the point of Modi coming here? We are prepared to help but the Nepali side is suspicious about everything.”

Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae, quoted in *Jana Astha*, 23 July



BIKRAM RAI

WELCOME HOME: Energy Minister, Radha Gyawali (*centre*) at the ariport on Tuesday to receive Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, who is expected to decide on pending issues like the draft framework agreement on hydropower cooperation with India.

Double meaning

Kantipur, 21 July

कान्तिपुर

The distrust between India and Nepal over cooperation in hydropower has increased because of ambiguous content of an Indian draft agreement. Some experts in Nepal fear that provisions in Clause 3b of the proposed agreement, which would allow future investment in power projects for ‘effective harnessing of Nepal’s hydropower potential through facilitation and speedy construction of hydroelectric projects in Nepal either with 100% Indian investments or joint venture with Indian entities’, would preclude third country or Nepali investment in Nepal’s own hydropower. However, the clause does not explicitly state that investors from other countries will not be allowed to

invest in hydropower in Nepal. One source in the energy sector nevertheless pointed out: “But if the Indian side sticks not to the spirit but just to the wording of this draft, it will be difficult to involve other countries in hydropower.”

The Nepali side will now specify projects in which Nepal and India have both agreed like Pancheswor, Karnali, Chisapani for projects with 100 per cent Indian equity, or to be developed in partnership with Nepal.

There are also misgivings about Article I about joint cooperation in power generation, transmission, energy efficiency and development of various types of renewable energy. Some Nepali experts say this means India will monopolise generation from not only hydropower but also other renewables.



BASIL EDWARD TEO

Gold for Sapana

Devaki Bista, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 13 July

हिमाल खबरपत्रिका

When *Nepali Times* met 16-year-old Sapana (*pic, above*) last month, she was training hard for the 8th World Taekwondo Cultural Expo in Korea and showed no sign of her traumatic past. This week, she has returned from the tournament with a gold medal.

For the seven other Nepali participants, who like Sapana were also victims of sexual violence, her victory was more than just a sporting success. But for Sapana, winning was still not enough to make her smile.

In 2012, Sapana, then 14, was raped by Sagar Bhatta and Amar Awasthi as she was travelling for her SLC examinations in Patan, Baitadi. The Baitadi District Court ordered a Rs 50,000 fine and 13-year jail terms for Bhatta and Awasthi.

But this April, an appellate court in Mahendranagar released the two rapists. Once out, they threatened her father to not make any further appeals. Sapana moved to Kathmandu, where she stayed with Rakshya Nepal,

an organisation that helps in rehabilitating sexual abuse victims.

Government lawyer Prakash Bahadur Bhandari, who has been fighting Sapana’s case, says he is not satisfied with the court’s decision and will appeal for justice again. Sapana herself can’t believe what has happened.

“What were the judges thinking when they let them go free,” she asks.

After years of counselling, Sapana was able to sit her SLC examinations this year and passed with first division grades. For someone who always topped her class, going back to school wasn’t difficult, but she was often haunted by the assault that changed her life two years ago. In between her studies – she wants to be a lawyer – she also took up Taekwondo lessons and earned a blue belt. Her gold medal this week has been well-earned.

Sapana’s name has been changed to protect her privacy.

nepalitimes.com

Fighting Spirit, #711
Watch Sapana's video interview

SHIKHA DARNAL

When patients threaten doctors and demand a guaranteed treatment, we in the medical profession often wonder why the conversation couldn't have started with a simple "hello" or a "namaste".

In five-and-half years of medical training, we attend lectures on behavioural repercussions in dealing with patients. But when the starting point is a threat, it is a symptom of how tarnished the entire medical profession has become.

It was not as if there were no warnings. I often heard complaints from my seniors and colleagues as I struggled to make my way into the profession, finally finding a position as a Medical Officer at the District Hospital in Hetauda of Makwanpur district. Little did I know what I was getting myself into.

Despite apprehensions, I had entered the job full of enthusiasm, as any novice would. At the very least, I expected cooperation, if not appreciation, from both the administration as well as the patients. The problems that we faced in Hetauda District Hospital were not markedly different from other healthcare centres in the country: frequent riots inside the emergency rooms, doctors and nurses manhandled by patients' families. It didn't take me and my colleagues long to realise that the people's distrust came from an almost complete denial of their rights to accessible, affordable and quality healthcare.

Given the mismanagement of government institutions in this country, it doesn't come as a surprise that the people's frustration with hospitals has become ingrained. Patients have to sometimes travel days from neighbouring districts just to reach the hospital, making their agony worse. The chances of getting referred to an expensive, better-equipped private hospital are high since, despite being a regional hospital, Hetauda lacks most services.

So what prevented us, a team of trained professionals, from improving the condition of Hetauda District Hospital? Did we lack the authority to guide improvements? Did we lack funds or skilled personnel? Were we perhaps taking the inefficiency for granted? We discussed all these complaints in numerous staff meetings, but perhaps we had too many meetings and never made the effort to implement solutions.

Health facilities outside the capital do not have sufficient personnel to provide regular services. The doctor to patient ratio is low in the countryside, with low retention of doctors in remote towns. Hetauda, despite its road connectivity, is not a popular posting for physicians.

Surprisingly, this regional hospital in Hetauda was providing care equivalent to the Primary Healthcare Centre in Palung where I was transferred later. Despite allocation of funds for collaboration between medical consultants and house officers,



KUNDA DIXIT

The malaise in medical care

Major reforms are necessary to improve, decentralise and restructure medical services in Nepal

there was no evidence that this was actually happening.

Medical professionals like myself have few options. We can either ignore the problem and opt for private practice, or we can pretend to care for patients while sucking up to the administration. However, it is impossible to be indifferent to the reality that only a small fraction of the health budget actually benefits patients. It became more difficult to speak up when I realised that the entire medical hierarchy was either directly involved or complicit in

embezzling funds.

To be sure, there are many dedicated medical staff. New doctors enter the profession full of enthusiasm and try their best to abide by the Hippocratic Oath to expect nothing in return, driven only by the immense satisfaction that comes from the blessings of the needy.

But this means nothing to hundreds of thousands of patients who have to suffer the consequences of a broken and corrupt system. Not every doctor can be expected to be selfless and

go out to remote districts without incentives. If that was the case, there would be no need for the hundreds of health assistants masquerading as doctors in the most neglected parts of this country. We may just have to console ourselves because, at the very least, people are getting some form of service.

Clearly, major reforms are necessary to improve, decentralise and restructure medical services in Nepal. However, endemic corruption stands in the way. 🇳🇵



Shikha Darnal is an MBBS from Nepalgunj Medical College who served two years in Hetauda District Hospital and Palung Health Centre in Makwanpur.

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Electing for good health, #687
Accountable to the poor, #678
Free for all healthcare, #660
Why some doctors stay, while others go away, #618
Do hospitals need to be so expensive? #561

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Life in the Turd World

Before we start, a reminder that it is in the national interest that we conduct this week's column with proper decorum. So, I would request readers not to giggle or twitter for the whole duration of the ceremony. As with all write-ups of a sensitive nature such as this, we also open with a statutory warning to all unaccompanied minors that this week's column is rated X and only readers who can prove with a photo ID that they are 18 or above are allowed to proceed (with caution) beyond this point. You two hiding there under the table, run along home to Mama now.

For legal reasons, management would also like to warn clients who are having breakfast to stop reading at this point in time, and remain in your bunkers until the all-clear is sounded. We will not be held responsible for any reverse peristalsis in the vicinity of the duodenum. (Don't say we didn't warn you, - Ed.)

OK, now that we are only

adults here, let us get to the crux of the biscuit. It is still a mystery why human beings find the activities of each others' digestive tracts so funny. Let's take a moment or two here to analyse why, for instance, it is that we find someone breaking the sound barrier while lifting a heavy object an event of such vast amusement that we can't help recounting in minute detail its auditory and olfactory attributes to a circle of peers who then break into paroxysms of scatological laughter. Really. What is so funny about a gas attack?

After all, it is a perfectly natural thing to do. Like all organisms on this planet (we don't yet know whether alien life forms on other yet-to-be-discovered planets have alimentary canals that are in working order, but the search is on) human beings have to eat. What they eat has to be digested by billions of bacteria and the result extirpated through a hatch known by its Latin name, cloaca maxima. I fail to see the humour in that.

So, in all seriousness, the point I'm trying to make is that we in the Turd World can't be squeamish when we are talking about bodily functions like Diaria (no, let me see if I can spell this right) Diarrhia. Diorama. Die-Ria. Dire-hoohah. Do-re-mi-fa. Diarrhoea (got it!). We also try to camouflage the name of the place we pee and poo behind a veil of politeness, which is pointless. Let's call a potty a potty, and let the chips fall where they may.

Which is why it is encouraging to receive photographs from various districts after they were declared open-defecation free to see that a whole industry of pay-to-go latrines have now come up across Nepal:



This could spawn a whole menu of options for customers using bathrooms so that they can be charged for the intensity or duration of the dump. For example, lodges in Thamel or along trekking trails which make most of their income from restaurants can now also turn toilets into a major revenue source. Here is a suggested price list:

- Mugling Belly With Full Bonnet Wash: Rs 20
- Mugling Belly With Dry Cleaning Only: Rs 15
- Extra-long Mugling Belly: Rs 10
- Non-lethal Hardware: Rs 6
- Short-term Deposit: Rs 5
- Long, But Fruitless, Squat: Rs 1 (Extra charge for reading material.)
- 10-Megaton Thermonuclear Explosion With Fallout: Rs 50 (+ 13% VAT)



The Ass

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