

NEPALI Times

#733

21 - 27 November 2014

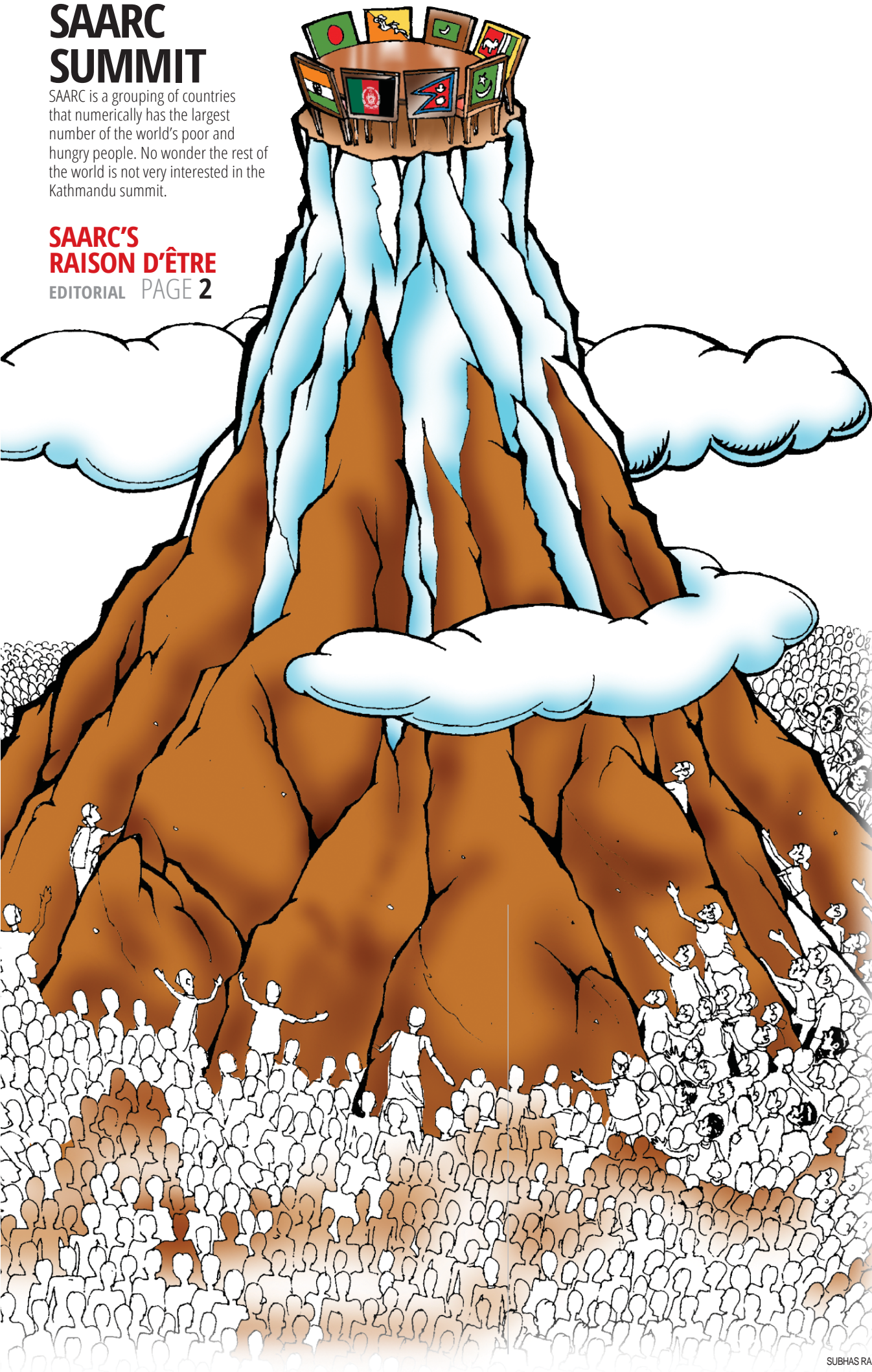
20 pages

Rs 50

SAARC SUMMIT

SAARC is a grouping of countries that numerically has the largest number of the world's poor and hungry people. No wonder the rest of the world is not very interested in the Kathmandu summit.

**SAARC'S
RAISON D'ÊTRE**
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SUBHAS RAI

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AT SAARC

Kathmandu can use its geopolitical positioning to upgrade SAARC into a dynamic regional grouping.

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REIMAGINING SOUTH ASIA

BY THE WAY
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BIKAS RAUNIAR

BEFORE THE SLAUGHTER

Pilgrims from India and Nepal have started arriving at the Gadhimai Festival (*pic, above*). There is expected to be a significant decline in the number of sacrifices this year because of the public outcry against the mass slaughter within Nepal and abroad.

MAOIST CHRISTIANS

How an Army spy became a Maoist and decided to spread the gospel among Nepal's guerrillas.

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SAARC’S RAISON D’ÊTRE

Twelve years ago, the SAARC Summit was finally held in Kathmandu after being postponed twice because of India-Pakistan tensions. The regional summit has a history of being held hostage by the persisting cold war between its two largest nuclear-armed members. The most newsworthy event in January 2002 in Kathmandu, in fact, was the perfunctory handshake between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Gen Pervez Musharraf.

A dozen years later, not much has changed. There has been deadly shelling over the Line of Control in Kashmir, and there was some worry that the Pakistanis would pull out at the last moment, or that Afghan leadership uncertainties would force a postponement. Barring late hitches, however, SAARC 2014 is on.

As international summits go, this will not make world headlines like the recent APEC, ASEAN or G20 Summits in Beijing, Naypyidaw and Brisbane. SAARC, after all, is a grouping of countries that numerically has the largest number of the world’s poorest and hungriest people. The sub-continent and the sub-Sahara are not much different in terms of average life-expectancy, rate of open defecation, child malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality. Despite progress in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, the sheer population size of India and Pakistan drags down the regional average. There are still parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains where more than half the children go to bed hungry every night.

Yet, these two countries are at each other's throats, spending precious resources on arming themselves when they should be allocating them for education and health of their people. For the past decade, India has the dubious distinction of being the world’s largest annual importer of conventional arms. Pakistan lavishes \$6 billion a year on its military.

The level of human development of South Asia, its economic status, and the well-being of its citizens,

If the South Asian Summit helps us to finally start thinking regionally and acting locally, it will be a start



influence how seriously it is taken by the international community. Inequality, deprivation and exclusion have a direct bearing on internal security of our countires. Popular insurrections, communal riots, insurgencies are fuelled by disenchantment and disillusionment of the youth. Underdevelopment, therefore, is a national security issue for South Asia. Inequality and social injustice have implications for stability and geo-strategic status of each of our countries. Let’s redefine the term ‘security’. It now has to go beyond

‘military security’ to include ‘human security’. A nation is secure if it is free from hunger, disease, homelessness and unemployment – not from perceived external enemies.

You can be sure these matters will not be discussed at the Kathmandu Summit next week. There will be platitudes about poverty, of course, and lofty rhetoric as there has been for the past three decades of SAARC’s existence. So, let’s not be too ambitious.

What will drive regional growth will still be bilateral economic ties. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made improvement of relations with neighbours a priority. That he took the trouble to invite leaders of South Asian countries to New Delhi for his inauguration went beyond symbolism, it indicated a shift in the paradigm of regional relations. For too long, Indian foreign policy towards the region has been driven by paranoia over encirclement, and a siege mentality stemming from none of its neighbours bordering each other but all of them sharing borders with India. Modi is trying to turn geography to India’s advantage, and make his country's vast market available to neighbours in a refreshing, new push for co-prosperity and stability.

SAARC can, therefore, focus on do-able things like loosening border controls, visa-free travel, promoting meaningful regional free trade, improving transportation and tele-connectivity, building a regional power grid, sharing rivers, flood control and weather early warning data. Few SAARC capitals are connected by air. If air connections are bad, you should try rail, road or sea links. Actually, you can’t. There aren’t any. Even Modi had to cancel his overland trip to Nepal.

There is really no sense in blaming the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu for not doing much. SAARC is the lowest common denominator of our red-tape, lack of transparency, and a debilitating cynicism about our own ability to work together. If the Summit helps us to finally think regionally and acting locally, it will be a start.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

#GADHIMAI

Gadhimai is based on a 260-year-old ritual that an 18th century imprisoned feudal lord dreamt of (“Overkill in Gadhimai”, Lucia de Vries and Deepak Adhikari, #732). Time for it to end.

Mary

■ Tens of millions of turkeys will be slaughtered on Thanksgiving Day in the US which coincidentally falls on 27 November, the same day as Gadhimai. Animals are killed and handled a lot more cruelly overseas, but these foreign activists who raise hell about the killings in Nepal don’t seem to make much fuss there.

Johnny Walker

■ The US is slaughtering turkeys so there is nothing wrong with Gadhimai massacre? What kind of perverted logic is this? Both are cruel and barbaric.

Avantika Regmi

■ I strongly agree that the massacres in Western slaughterhouses are not any better, and rather worse actually, than what happens during Gadhimai in Nepal. I oppose all forms of horrible animal murders, wherever they are taking place. If you care about animals, you don’t eat them and you don’t give money to the system that keeps exploiting them. But people who have not embraced a vegan lifestyle are quite hypocritical when they express their disgust at Gadhimai. You can’t blame the people who murder animals

at Gadhimai and keep buying animal flesh in supermarkets.

Julian

■ I am against the tradition as I learnt that only four per cent of animals are consumed and the rest rot and are buried.

S S Pokhrel

■ Gadhimai should be a day for those that outsource death to the supply chain to do some self-reflection.

Non-veg

■ There are two types of killings: humane and inhumane. The question is how to make killings at Gadhimai less inhumane.

Subhas Lamichhane

■ Europeans kill and eat more animals in a day than will be killed at Gadhimai, so what is the problem with doing so here out in the open?

Sagar Ruptse

MODI’S SECOND COMING

A balanced piece (‘The second coming’, Editorial, #732). Basically, Nepalis are telling Modi that they like the fact that he likes them, but please don’t drag us into your bigoted and regressive domestic policies. As an Indian, I hope our prime minister gets the message not to mix religion and geopolitics.

Rahul

■ The author has failed to see or pretends not to see, that monarchy and Hindu state are different. We can have a Hindu Nepal without having a monarchy. The editor also

says Nepalis have moved on from monarchy. That is not true. The new CA has not even discussed monarchy.

Reformed

■ A plea to Prime Minister Modi: help Nepal stay united and become a Hindu Rastra. Save us from monsters like Dahal and Bhattarai. Pashupati will bless you, Mr Modi. Do the right thing for Nepal.

Niru Nepali

SAARC

SAARC is a failure. (“From landlocked to landlinked”, David Seddon, #732) Nothing good has come of it. Ideology without implementation is only fiction.

Resham Lama

FEDERALISM

The argument that federalism is more democratic and brings progress is not necessarily true (“Frivolous federalism”, Bihari Krishna Shrestha, #732). And historically, the break up of unitary states into smaller federal states, either based on geography or ethnicity, has led to bigger problems for the people of those countries. Other than the huge administrative cost and increased tax burden for the people, it is unclear how having more states with the same feudal set up is going to be more progressive or democratic for the people.

Dev Batsya

TRANSGENIC FOOD

As a student of science, I believe genetically modified products don’t pose any serious threats to human beings or other animals (“Transgenic

food”, Roshan Karki, #731) . But GM seeds are very expensive and simply not affordable to Nepali farmers. They have to depend on these seed maker companies to buy the seeds in every season of farming.

Rjackson33

■ I don’t believe there is any direct health risk to the consumer. The underlying problem is money. Companies pour in millions to create these ‘superman’ seeds. Where is the payback for them? Well, just kill the reproductive ability of these GM plants and farmers need to keep buying seeds for the next season, rather than using their own.

N

INVESTMENT

Ashutosh Tiwari left out the most important word, corruption in his Cross Cutting column (“Is Nepal really open for investment?”, #732. Do you have any idea how long it takes to get a business license without paying a bribe? And what about security and khaobadis? As a Nepali, I have zero trust in the political leadership, why should a foreigner trust it?

Mahesh

CORRECTION

In ‘Come fly with me’, #732, the height of the jump in the Everest Skydive was incorrectly stated due to a metric conversion error. Skydivers actually jump from 7,620m.

THIS WEEK



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Swayambhu Stupa with Gauri Shankar in the backdrop on a clear autumn day on Wednesday.

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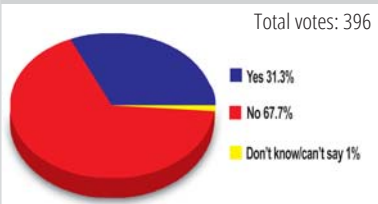
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Overkill in Gadhimai by Lucia de Vries and Deepak Adhikari (34 comments)



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Weekly Internet Poll #733

Q. Was it necessary to declare two days public holiday for the SAARC summit?



Weekly Internet Poll #734
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Q. Will Modi steal SAARC's thunder?



The upcoming SAARC Summit, the third in Nepal after 1987 and 2002, is happening as Kathmandu suffers deep socio-political polarisations as it tries a second time to write the constitution. The national civil society is as if in stupor, while the political class is stretched thin and in poor position to lead the diplomats and bureaucrats.



ANALYSIS
Kanak Mani Dixit

Narendra Modi has arrived like a meteor over South Asian skies, but we do not know if his imperious unilateralism will work in the South Asian regional context. Coming to attend the multilateral SAARC summit, he plans barn-storming events in Janakpur and Lumbini that the timid politicians of Kathmandu do not have the wherewithal to deny. (At press time, the two visits suddenly seemed to be in doubt.)

As the host nation on 26-27 November, and the SAARC chair till the next summit perhaps two years away, Nepal has the onus of tackling the Modi wagon in a manner as befits and benefits all South Asia. It is clear that, both personally and geopolitically, the new prime minister of India wants the neighbouring countries to achieve progress, but will he proceed consultatively? We do not yet know whether his forceful personality can function within the confines of the sovereignties of SAARC.

Nepal is probably the ideal member-state to take up the chairmanship of SAARC at this sensitive hour of transition because it remains geopolitically the least-threatening among the larger countries of South Asia. The first thing obviously is for the observers of SAARC to realise its limitations, functioning as it does under the strait-jacket of consensus among eight foreign ministries. SAARC's lack of dynamism reflects the reality of strident nationalisms among the majority post-colonial states of South Asia.

We can disparage SAARC's snail-pace, but we have to appreciate it just for being there, forcing the heads of government every so often to give the official nod to the concept of regionalism. In reality, it is not the governments but the civil society of our societies that will help build regionalism of the kind that soften borders and builds prosperity and peace.

At the very least, the goal-setting in the SAARC Social Charter and the South Asia Free Trade Area represents aspirations, and if not at the regional then these can be achieved at the national and bilateral levels. The oft-repeated call for allowing discussion on bilateral differences between the governments of SAARC is a non-starter and it is best to shelve this suggestion till such time we have all matured. In



Pride and prejudice at SAARC

Kathmandu can use its geopolitical positioning to upgrade SAARC into a dynamic regional grouping

BIKRAM RAI

the meantime, Kathmandu can take the lead in adding texture to SAARC.

The most pressing need at the conceptual level is to define not only pan-regional (all eight members) but sub-regional (two or more members) activities as 'SAARC'-related or 'South Asian'. This simple demarche will inject adrenalin into the organisation, helping it represent the true diversity and energy of the Subcontinent. Simply put, SAARC is restricted in its scope by having to include each of the eight members in every activity, which leads mostly towards lowest-common-denominator initiatives.

There are at least two Nepal-generated proposals before the foreign ministers when they meet to finalise the summit agenda. One is for SAARC to formally support the cooperative movement as an alternative basis for socially-committed action, distinguished from governmental action, the private sector, development donors and the non-governmental organisations. None of the member states should have a problem with this proposal.

The other proposal which the trade unionists and labour activists of Nepal have strenuously lobbied for is a SAARC-level partnership to protect the millions of South Asian job migrants toiling overseas. This would be important for the migrant-sending countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The big question, as always, is whether national pride and prejudice will keep India and Pakistan from agreeing to a joint SAARC platform, this one on migrant labour.

The official theme for the Summit as suggested by Nepal is 'Deeper integration for peace, progress and prosperity', and the specific focus should be on infrastructural connectivity as a means of building stakeholders for regional stability. For this to have meaning, too, we must re-jig the SAARC formula to allow the sum of bilateral 'connectivities'

to cumulatively promote regional goals.

There are literally hundreds of urgent issues that SAARC must take up regionally and sub-regionally. One would be the 'Asian brown cloud', especially as India accelerates its use of low-grade coal. We need to collaborate on conservation of rhinoceros between Nepal, India and Bhutan;

transit through Bangladesh for India, transit through Pakistan for Afghanistan and India are priorities.

Some of these matters will be addressed in the People's SAARC, a gathering of South Asian civil society on 23-24 November, and the day will come when what is discussed among the people will find its way into the formal

agenda of SAARC summits and programs. It may even take decades, but SAARC will have 'arrived' when the governments of South Asia decide formally to address human rights abuse by state and non-state actors, and agree on a regional mechanism to deliver justice to the victims. 🇳🇵

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Cleaning up Janakpur

Officials need to clean up their act, not just tidy up the town for the Modi visit

DAVID SEDDON
in JANAKPUR

The town that is the birthplace of Sita was getting all spruced up in preparation for the visit here of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi next week. But the cancellation has focused attention on the neglect of this town.

As in the capital, Kathmandu, rapid progress has been made in recent weeks to clean up the garbage, corral and remove the herds of semi-feral wild pigs, paint the buildings and repair roads that should have been upgraded and made fit for purpose months, if not years ago.

Some of the activity has been the work of a popular campaign to clean up the famous ponds of Janakpur, but some has been the result of an unusual concern on the part of the government to improve the visible appearance of

the city.

Minister for Physical Planning and Transport Bimalendra Nidhi has been more active than most in the last few months, orchestrating a welcome for the Modi visit on 25 November. It seems that representatives from the local business community, district leaders of various political parties, security chiefs, CDOs and LDOs and other big-wigs in government and the administration, as well as civil society leaders from Dhanusha, Mahottari and Sarlahi, were all present at a preliminary meeting held at the Local Development Training Centre at Mujheliya on 14 November.

A civic reception was to be held in honour of Modi when he arrived perhaps along one of the recently upgraded roads from the border. Minister Nidhi, who is himself from Janakpur, had taken the opportunity to announce that negotiations were underway to

twin Janakpur with Ayodhya (marrying Sita with Ram, as it were) and to bring in Indian assistance for the development of the Janakpur Ring Road and the construction and renovation of local religious sites.

The proposals were first announced in July when a meeting of the Greater Janakpur Area Development Council decided to request support from

India to beautify the areas of three key temples of Janakpur and the religious ponds. Nidhi apparently hoped that announcements would be made regarding this anticipated Indian aid during the visit, but all that is up in the air now.

Still, many will be asking whatever happened to the funds promised by the Asian Development Bank a few years ago for the urban development and reconstitution of Janakpur.

Journalist Nirjana Sharma last year asked 'What ails Janakpur?'



and drew attention to the massive misuse, and disappearance, of funds for the maintenance and development of the town. He pointed out that Dhanusha stood last in the list of all the 75 districts of Nepal in the Minimum Condition Performance Measures (MCPM) of the Ministry of Local

Development and Federal Affairs (MoFALD), receiving just 27 out of 100 points, failing to meet the satisfactory development criteria. None of Dhanusha's 101 VDCs and the Janakpur Municipality met ministry targets.

Dhanusha was one of the only nine 'failed' districts

Modi plays it safe

The cancellation of Modi's Janakpur visit is a reflection of how Nepal's domestic politics has always spilled over into relations with India

JANAKPUR -- India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi had decided to attend the SAARC Summit in Kathmandu by symbolically crossing the border overland on 25 November from Bihar to this town in Nepal, the birthplace of Sita.

He was to be offering puja at the Janaki Temple and address the public, and this had landed the Nepal government into a bit of a quandary.

The anger against Kathmandu's attempt to muzzle Modi was already unmistakable here in the capital of Mithila. "It is not about security. The Nepal government is afraid that a hugely popular Modi would announce some development projects which they have been unable to deliver," said Shiv Shankar Sah, chairman of Janakpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In the end, Nidhi blamed the cancellation on the "extremist and intolerant" attitude shown by the UCPN(Maoist) and its allied Madhesi parties to issue threats against the visit. The government was already trying to douse increasing local pressure and the sensitivity of a foreign leader making a public address. But secretly, some in Kathmandu must be heaving a sigh of

relief because they feared Modi would raise hopes of restoring a Hindu state.

In Janakpur, priests, politicians and businessmen I spoke to this week before the cancellation were all unanimous in their support for a Hindu state.

They resented the attempt to make Nepal secular in the new constitution, arguing that religious minorities were never discriminated against when Nepal was a Hindu state. But they were not in favour of restoring the monarchy.

The Mahant of the Janaki Temple, Ram Tapeswar Das, was confident that the new constitution would restore the Hindu Rastra. When reminded that an overwhelming majority of the Constituent Assembly members are committed to Nepal being a secular state, he replied: "A referendum on the subject will tell us what the majority actually want."

But isn't it already in the Interim Constitution? "That is only a temporary measure," came the prompt reply.

Nidhi, on the other hand, said in a statement late Thursday: 'We and Janakpur have lost a great opportunity with the cancellation of the visit ...despite all the preparation under my leadership for the visit, the UCPN(M) and Madhesi parties irresponsibly demonstrated against the preparations and issued threats.'


Nidhi had told me on Sunday that the visit would have a positive effect for Nepal's unity and stability. He, however, could not clarify if the speech Modi would have given in Janakpur would first be vetted by the government.

Modi may not have wanted to upset his phenomenal popularity in Nepal where the Gujarat riots and his role in it are rarely mentioned. Most Nepalis are impressed by his charisma and 'development model'. The opposition in Janakpur may have become just too hot to handle.

In his well-received address to the Nepal parliament in August followed by his Republic Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, and then in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September, he cited Nepal as a role model for conflict resolution. That has not gone unnoticed in Nepal.

And neither has it in India. So the current powers that be in India would be wary of sacrificing the new-found goodwill for Modi, and by its xtension, to India.

Modi and his close advisers are reportedly miffed at the way India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) mishandled Nepal policy during the Maoist insurgency. They blame the spy agency for contributing to anti-India sentiment in Nepal. Besides, the new Indian establishment sees the election result of November 2013 in Nepal as a confirmation of its stance.

Would Modi want to embarrass the Nepal government and many in Nepal who do not identify themselves as Hindus by playing to the domestic gallery? By cancelling the Janakpur visit, Modi has shown he is going to play it safe.  @damakant


THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshi

In a meeting chaired by Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport Bimalendra Nidhi here earlier this week, parliamentarians, the business community, representatives of non-government organisations and various associations objected to the government's plan to confine Modi to inside the temple complex.

Most people here wanted a felicitation ceremony to take place at the nearby Barhabigha which had hosted some Indian leaders in the past, including a prime minister and two presidents.

"If the government does not organise the felicitation at Barhabigha, then we will hold our own public reception for Modiji and request him to attend," said Chanda Chaudhury of the Nepal-Bharat Mahila Maitri Sangh.

MODI'S
TOUR





AMIR JOSHI

whose development budgets were reduced by 25 per cent as punishment of malfunction, the accounts had not been audited for two years. Locals blamed the municipality and the district government, and talked privately of massive corruption. The LDO was reported as saying that

development work was minimal 'due to the interference of vested groups'.


There were at that time 22 political parties in the all-party mechanism of the DDC. The local political leaders for their part blamed rival parties or the central body for the political situation

and the backwardness in development. Many pinned their hopes for improvement on the agreement the Ministry of Urban Development signed with the ADB in July 2013 for a four-year road project worth Rs 1.6 billion.

The project was based on a study called *Unleashing Economic Growth: Region-Based Urban Development Strategy for Nepal (2010)*, one of whose authors was eminent Nepali geography professor, Pushkar Pradhan. The project document prepared by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works for the ADB proposed the following components: storm water drainage, roads and lanes improvements and solid waste management. Community Development Programs were to be defined during implementation in poverty pockets and guided by the Resettlement Framework prepared for the project.

More than three years after this proposal was published and more than a year after the agreement was signed, there is little sign of any progress either with the ADB Urban Renewal project or effective disbursement of government funds for maintenance development.

Where has the money gone?

It seems that it is time for those officially responsible for the management and improvement of the rich heritage area of greater Janakpur to clean up their own act, and not just the visible features of the city and its surroundings. 

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Momos in Turkish

Turkish Airlines' new 'Widen your world' global advertising campaign ad has international football stars Didier Drogba and Lionel Messi making a culinary journey across the world. Nepal and its popular momos also make a brief

appearance in the ad created by Crispin Porter & Bogusky. "The commercial explores the concept that food is the only way to experience different cultures," said Turkish in its press statement.

Easy remittance

Prabhu Bank has signed an agreement with RBL Bank of India to facilitate easy transfer of remittance for Nepali workers in India. Migrant workers all across India will now be able to send home money from 180 branches of RBL Bank, remittance money can be collected from any of Prabhu's 112 branches in Nepal.



Long running

Gionee Phones has introduced a new version of their M series mobiles, the M3. Boasting 33.7 hours of talk-time and 32.8 days of standby, the phone has a Quad Core 1.3 Ghz processor, 5.0 HD display, DTS sound, 8MP back and 2 MP front camera.

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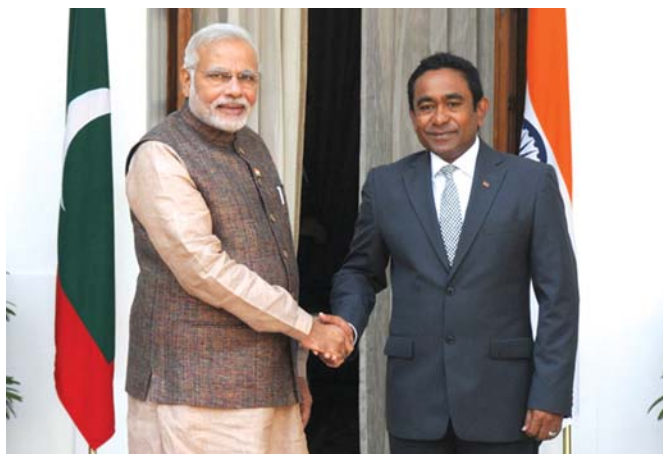
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Reimagining South Asia

The Indian Prime Minister has an opportunity to go beyond his domestic image makeover to become a regional leader



The street lights are lit, roads have been black-topped, side-walks paved. Kathmandu is getting a much-needed cosmetic facelift.

The government is even shutting down schools and offices for two days. The importance of next week's SAARC summit



BY THE WAY
Anurag Acharya

for post-conflict Nepal, and the possibilities it will open for its recuperating economy can't be overstated.

The two-day jamboree will see leaders of eight member nations and nine international observer delegations, including United States, China, European Union, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Iran. In the recent years,

the regional body has earned a reputation for being a talk shop. Past SAARC Summits have also been eclipsed by tensions between India and Pakistan.

But the 18th SAARC summit is expected to change all that, paving the way for closer cooperation between members and fostering regional integration. The agenda includes the longstanding goal of connecting South Asia, allowing citizens of SAARC nations to travel to other member countries by land, waiving visa fee for SAARC citizens and regional Power Trade Agreement (PTA) to facilitate energy trade among member states. All this will boost growth, bringing peace and stability to the region through economic and social integration.

However, the Nepal government and the Kathmandu media are treating the occasion more as a Indo-Nepal Summit. The media obsession with Modi's visit to Hindu and Buddhist

shrines in Muktinath and Lumbini, where he is scheduled to deliver addresses and distribute bicycles to students, has the government nervous.

Modi's last visit to Nepal was historic in terms of improving bilateral cooperation on many issues, including energy. But these were deals between two sovereign governments guaranteeing mutual benefits, Nepal does not need to bend over backwards in appreciation.

To understand Modi's love for public diplomacy, one must look back at his recent past. Here is a person, who was feared, if not hated in India until a year back for his divisive politics. But thanks to the unpopularity of his political opponents, and astute media management, Narendra Modi managed to clean up his image and win the election with a landslide.

Today, despite communal clashes under his government, Modi has been able to bewitch

national and international media with his magic mantra of 'bikas and bhaichara' (development and fraternity). So, while the Muslims in parts of Delhi are prevented from celebrating their festival by BJP leaders, non-resident Indians from the same community rapturously welcomed Modi in Australia earlier this month. Such is the power of 'Modi Mania', even the world's most powerful nation which once compared him to Hitler and imposed a travel ban, rolled out the red carpet in October.

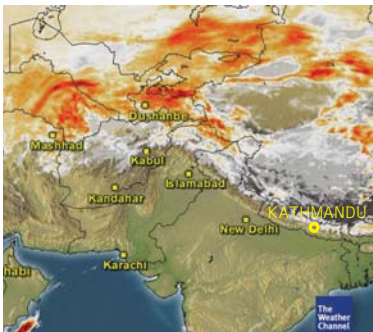
To be fair to Modi, he seems to be making a genuine effort to transform not just his image but his politics as well. This was most evident during his election campaign in Faizabad, near Ayodhya where he miffed the radical RSS and his mentor Mohan Bhagwat by deliberately refraining from making any mention of the disputed Ram Temple.

He invited Pakistani Prime

Minister Nawaz Sharif to his swear-in ceremony during a period of strained relations, patiently mended Indo-China ties while the Chinese were clashing with Indian forces at the border. Modi has reached out to his neighborhood. In Nepal, he disappointed ultra-Hindu nationalists by refraining from any mention of Hindu religion during his parliamentary address in August.

Narendra Modi is sure to grab all the attention of the Nepali and international media next week, but if he really wants to go beyond image makeover and project himself as a regional leader, he must take the responsibility of playing a pivotal role in bringing peace and political stability in South Asia.

This will not just make him popular back home, but earn him support and leadership of one-fifth of world population. @Anurag_Acharya



GAME GURU IN NEPAL



More than 70 million people around the world play Candy Crush Saga every day, 700,000 of them are in Nepal – one of the largest numbers in any country in the world.

Last year, Swedish company Kings Digital Entertainment which owns Candy Crush made 1.8 billion dollars in revenue, most of it came from the social mobile game. Even after two years of release, the game's popularity continues to grow with daily installations crossing well over 50,000.

With the exception of North Korea, the game is played in every country in the world, even in the continent of Antarctica. What is it about the game that has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries to become the most played game the world has ever seen?

"I think it struck a chord with people of all ages and countries because of its simplicity and accessibility," Game Guru of Kings, Tommy Palm said in an exclusive interview with

I had no idea in 2011 that Candy Crush was going to be played by millions of people around the world.

Nepali Times. "I had no idea in 2011 that it was going to be played by millions of people around the world." Palm was in Kathmandu for the Ncell App Camp and spoke on Saturday at the Everest Hotel.

Candy Crush is free to download and play, and because it is a cross platform game, users can easily switch from playing on the phone to computer or even tablet. It makes money from in-app purchases of extra moves, lives and boosters.

Statistics show that women between 25 to 55 are the most loyal players, and spend longest time playing it. Palm admits it is the first game that he developed which even his mother and sister play.

"There are already a lot of games for men in the market, but very few for women so it is not hard to see why women play it the most," explains the Swedish programmer. The parent company Kings has developed a niche market for non-violent computer games and young women are an important target group.

Palm, who started developing games in the 90s, is a self declared geek. He began playing games at seven and by the time he was 12, had already started programming. Like a stereotypical gamer, he spent most of his time in his room, curtains drawn, eyes on computer causing his parents to repeatedly ask him to be more outgoing.

Palm doesn't like the word "addictive" to describe the game the whole world is playing, he prefers "engaging". He says the trick is to make people want to come back, and to challenge them. However, when so many people spend so much time playing the game on-screen, doesn't it take them away from reading and face-to-face social interactions?

"It is important to do everything in moderation," Palm

explains, with the air of someone who has answered this question many times before, "just because you have games doesn't mean you don't need friends or a social life. Being a book worm is also not very sociable."

Because of the game's popularity, Ncell thought Tommy would be perfect to speak at the Ncell App Camp. "The main aim of the App Camp is to encourage Nepali app developers," says Ncell's Sanju Koirala, "and Tommy is a great role model and we believe his presence will boost the event."

A Swedish company, Kings has always looked outside its borders for revenue earning. Something Nepali developers will need to start doing to truly make their apps global. "We live in a really exciting time with so much potential in start-up business. If you have talent in doing something that can go global, now is the time," said Palm (*pic*) to the finalists of the Ncell App Camp on Saturday.

Nepal's social media networks were abuzz as word spread that Palm was in town. With 4.5 million Facebook users, Candy Crush is benefiting from the spread of smartphones and mobile internet.

Sobhana Shrestha is an avid player, and says she got hooked to the game while nursing her baby. "He would get up and cry at odd hours, and I had to wait until he went back to sleep, and started playing the game," she adds.

Many Nepali players want to know: will the saga ever end? "Not anytime soon," says Palm, "we will keep on adding more levels as long as there is still interest in the game."

Tsering Dolker Gurung



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EVENTS

Photo Annapurna,

Join photographers Ariel Estulin and Louis Au on a journey to Annapurna and experience the beauty of the region through the eyes of professionals. \$1,775, 21 to 30 November, www.outdoorphotojourney.com

Yerma,

One World Theatre's rendition of the Spanish folk musical tragedy by the great poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca. *Rs 200 (adults)/ Rs 100 (students), 29 November to 21 December (Mondays off), 5pm ; 13 & 20 December, 1pm, The Village Theatre, Lajimpat, (01)4001089, oneworldtheatre.np@gmail.com*

Winter bazaar,

A showcase of exquisite, cultural and authentic arts and handicrafts, knit wears, music and culinary delights. *29 November, 11am to 6pm, Babar Mahal Revisited*



Yoga retreat,

Learn to keep your body healthy and mind and heart balanced at this yoga workshop. *21 to 23 November, Chandra Ban Eco-Resort, www.ishacenter.com*

Christmas at Dhukuti,

Dhukuti launches its new range of Christmas products. *Kupondole www.facebook.com/DhukutiACP*

Infinite dreams,

Artist Pierre Capponi's artworks reflecting on changes in Nepal in the last two decades on display. *23 November, 11am to 4pm, Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre, Patan Museum, www.kathmanduarts.org*

Natural dye,

An exhibition showcasing handmade clothes, shawls, jewellery,carpets made from natural dye. *Opens 21 November, 5pm to 8pm until 6 December, 11am to 7pm Taragoan museum, Hyatt hotel, Boudha*

Tackling pollution,

Environment specialist Bidya Banmail Pradhan will tackle pollution issues in Nepal and discuss what can be done. *28 November, 9.30am onwards, Hotel Shankar, Lajimpat*

Slam poetry,

A two-day workshop with slam poet Nasala Chitrakar on spoken word poetry. *Rs 800, 29 & 30 November, 11am to 2pm, Sattya Media, 9813485716*

Startup weekend,

Share ideas, form teams, makes contacts and launch startups at this global network of leaders and entrepreneurs. *21 to 23 November, 4pm onwards, kathmandu.startupweekend.org, 9841776214*



Karavan Kathmandu,

Karavan Kathmandu is a pop-up bazaar that opens in various locations around town every three months. A select group of designers and entrepreneurs based in Nepal will put on display their unique products at this edition of the bazaar which takes place 30 November



at Moksh Complex in Jhamsikhel. With a wide range of products- from natural and organic skincare products, handcrafted jewellery, to one-of-a-kind accessories, and fair-trade clothing to home decor items and art pieces- to choose from, this might just be the place to get all your holiday shopping done.

30 November, 1 to 5pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, www.facebook.com/karavankathmandu

DINING



Aalishan,

For mouth-watering kebabs, flavourful curries and delicious biryanis. Live music on Fridays. *Jhamsikhel, (01)5542032*

Thanksgiving,

Celebrate Thanksgiving with a traditional Thanksgiving-themed dinner complete with turkeys, pecan pies and free mulled wine. *27 to 29 November, 6pm onwards, Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel, (01)4250440*

Fire and Ice,

Most popular Italian restaurant in town, book table early, *Thamel, (01) 44250210*

Alfresco,

For homemade pastas and other lip-smacking Italian delights. *Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999*



Grill Me,

A restaurant with a warm ambience and delicious grilled delights. *Jhamsikhel, (01)5535294*

Mezze by Roadhouse,

The hottest new place to dine in town, almost, always crowded. *Darbar Marg*

Barista lavazza,

The newest addition to the Valley's European inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich. *Jawalakhel*



Yin Yang Restaurant,

East meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can't handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. *Thamel, (01)4701510*

Degaa Resto Lounge,

For mouth watering Newari and Indian cuisine. *Kumaripati*

Vootoo,

The new home of Newari cuisine, as well as a continental menu for those who want to play it safe. *Lajimpat, (01)4005222*

Dan Ran,

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Rs 250, 21 November, 7.30pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel

**Music Fest,**

A culture and music festival with performances by Nepali and international bands like The Edge Band, X-Mantra, Steve Iko (Denmark), and Thermal And A Quarter (India).

13 December, 12pm onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap, www.nepalmusicfestival.org

Deathfest,

Accomplished – local and international – Extreme Metal bands come together to celebrate the glorious genre.

9 and 10 January, venue to be announced

Starry Night BBQ,

Catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick.

Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards, Fridays, Shambala Garden Café. Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999

**Purplefest,**

Popular Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam will be performing with Nepali singers Sugam Pokharel, Yama Buddha. Also, present will be Indian comedian Kapil Sharma and other Nepali comedians.

13 December, 3 to 7pm, Dashrath Stadium, www.ncell.com.np/purplefest

GETAWAYS

Mango Tree Lodge,

Culture walks, rafting in the Karnali, wildlife exploration, and jungle safari at the Bardia National Park. *Bhetani, Bardia, info@mangotree lodge.com*

Fulbari Resort,

Enjoy the scenic view of Pokhara as you pamper yourself with tennis, golf, drinks, and dinners. *Pokhara, (01)4461918*

Mum's Garden Resort,

Head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages, surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range.

Lake Side, Pokhara, (061)463468

**Waterfront Resort,**

The lakeside hotel invites you for special barbeque dinners on Friday and lunches on Saturday. Sedi Height, Lakeside road, Pokhara, (061)466303/304, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com

Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,

Add value to your travel in Lumbini with a stay at probably the best hotel in the area. *Lumbini, (71)580220, 9801033109, info@ktmgh.com*

Temple Tree Resort,

A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna, it'll be hard to leave once you go in. *Gaurighat, Lakeside, (61)465819*



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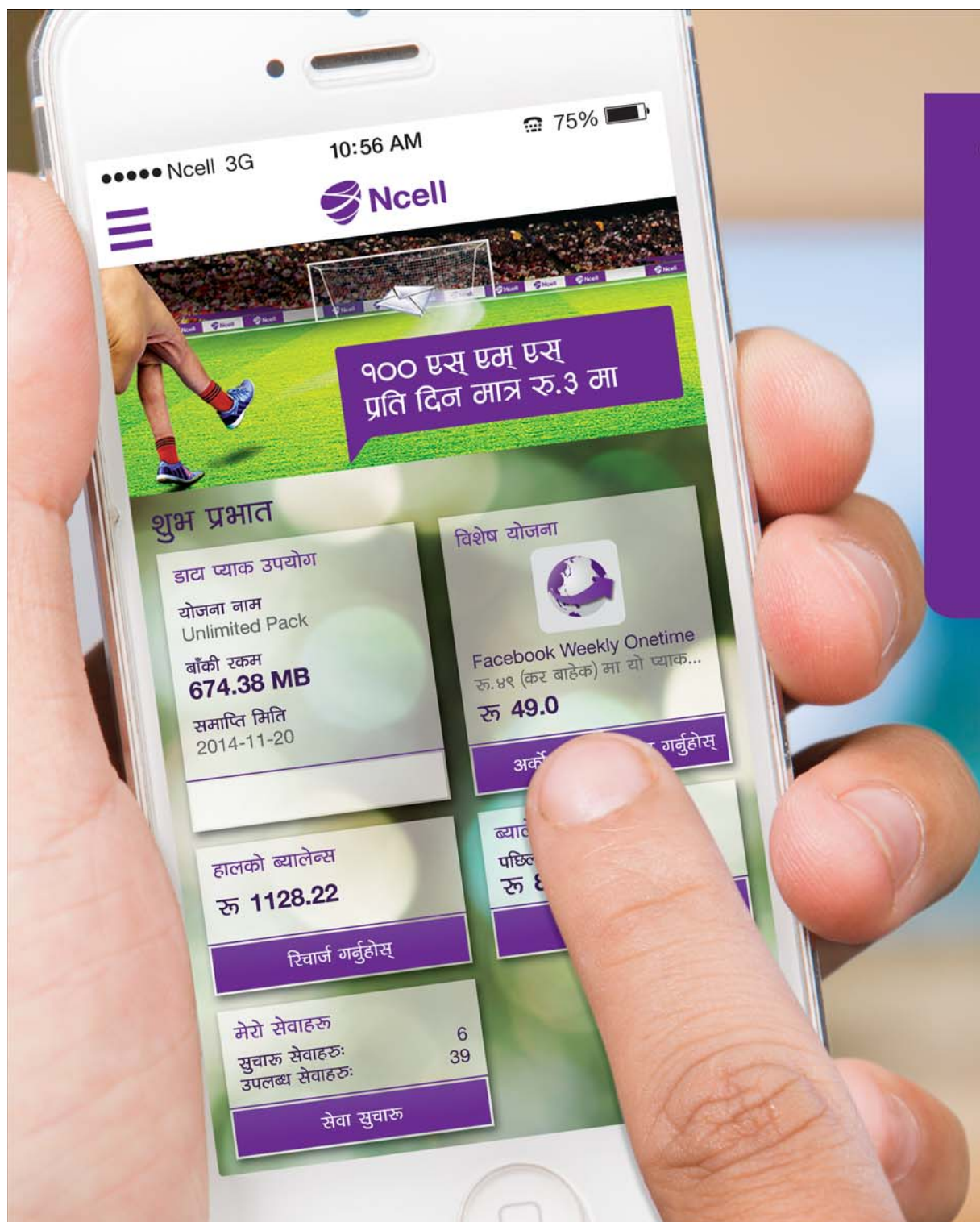


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WHY NEPALI FOOTBALL HASN'T KICKED OFF

ELVIN L SHRESTHA

The popularity of football has spread in Nepal in direct performance of its men's and women's in international tournaments, and is poised to become even more popular as the live broadcast of Indian Super League hooks audiences via its sub-continental satellite footprint.

However, football is competing with cricket for domestic audiences, and although Nepali teams have done better than before, the failure to bring home football trophies means that fan culture is still not up to expectations.

"I don't think the Nepali team is less capable than any of the countries that compete in the SAFF Championship," says football analyst Sanjib Mishra, "we are just not able to provide proper facilities, trainings and opportunities." Since audience size increases in direct proportion to the wins by the national team, public interest is still weak.

In the leagues, the money involved has increased but there is still a long way to go. Clubs that used to operate with a budget of Rs 1 million now require up to Rs 10 million. The top prize for the national football league has risen from Rs 7.5 million last year to Rs 10 million in the 2015 national league set to begin early December.

However, unless audience interest expands, sponsors and investors will not be enticed to fork out money. "Sponsors are very important for a club to be able to do

- 1 Lack of major international wins
- 2 Not enough facilities, training
- 3 Sponsorship shortage

well," says Mishra, "but business houses are sponsoring clubs with modest sums as part of their corporate social responsibility."

National team captain Sagar Thapa says sponsorship is directly related to Nepal's performance in overseas games. "If the national team shows more professionalism and achieves some major successes, sponsorship will automatically go up," he adds.

Thapa says for performance to improve, there has to be more investment in football facilities and training. But no major sports infrastructure has been added in the last 30 years, except for the Satdobato Complex. Football clubs need stadiums to practice and host mini-tournaments, which are in short supply.

The lethargy in national politics is also evident in sports, with a lack of professionalism, commitment and consistency on the part of the football governing body, ANFA (All Nepal Football Association) as well as the players. ANFA itself is mired in controversy after corruption allegations prompted the resignation of its president Ganesh Thapa and a reprimand from FIFA.

Thapa is accused of embezzling funds worth Rs 581.71 million and accepting \$115,000 in bribe from former Asian

Football Confederation (AFC) President Mohammad Bin Hammam. The parliamentary Public Accounts Commission (PAC) and the FIFA Ethics Committee are currently investigating the case. Thapa has been suspended for two months from football-related activities.

Even though more footballers have become professionals, most have side jobs in the civil service, army or police and don't have time for proper training or take part in international tournaments.

The national league, on the other hand, is too Kathmandu-centric: six of the 11 clubs in the country are based in the capital with the others in Jhapa, Kailali, Makwanpur, Morang and Rupandehi. "It is sad that people have to leave their lives in their home-districts and come to Kathmandu to be able to play a game they love," says Thapa.

Thapa says developing football in Nepal needs improvements at three levels that are mutually dependent: results in international tournaments, facilities and training for players, and sponsorships.

Nepal hasn't won any international tournament since the 1993 South Asian Games, and Thapa hopes that the long drought will finally end in the upcoming 2015 SAFF Championship in India. www.the-anfa.com



Nepalis dominate Hong Kong race

AMY GUNIA
in HONG KONG

Ramesh Bhattachan holds Hong Kong dear to his heart. Born and raised in Nepal, he grew up at a time when opportunities in Nepal were limited and passports were difficult to obtain.

He jumped at the opportunity to move to Hong Kong as a Gurkha for the British Army. Last week, Bhattachan returned to Hong Kong, hoping his dream would again become reality in the city he calls a second home.

This time, however, his hopes rested on the shoulders

of four young Nepali runners, who would be participating in Hong Kong's grueling 100 km Oxfam Trailwalker race under his watchful eye.

"They will be famous and popular runners back in Nepal if they win," Bhattachan said last week, in between training sessions with his team. And win they did. On Friday evening Uttam Khatri, Bhim Gurung, Ram Bhandari and Kiran Kulung finished the race in an impressive 11 hours and 56 minutes. With the second place team finishing nearly

45 minutes later, it was an easy win.

"The Nepali team was so fast that I never saw them again after the start," said Keith Noyes, a Hong Kong-based trail race organiser, whose team finished the race in 15 hours and 13 minutes. "They were in a class by themselves in this race," he said.

None of the Nepali runners are new to Trailwalker. Khatri and Bhandari, both members of the Nepal Army, ran for the winning team last year. Gurung, also a member of the Nepal Army, and





BETTER HALF

After defeating Bangladesh 1-0 on Wednesday, Nepali women's football team will now play against India in the finals of the third SAFF Women's Championship which is being held in Pakistan. The team had earlier defeated Sri Lanka 3-0, Pakistan 2-0, and Bhutan 8-0 to reach the top four.



Nepal was also finalists in the last two editions of the SAFF Championship but lost the title to India both times.

Despite its international success, the women's team remains largely ignored at home. Only a tiny portion of ANFA's big budget goes to the women's football team, female players are paid less than their male counterparts, and have to make do with limited training.

Last week, the Ministry of Youth and Sports announced a prize of Rs 100,000 to each player of the team if the Nepali team wins the championship.

HIMAL ARCHIVE



OXFAM

FINISH LINE: (from left) Ram Bhandari, Bhim Gurung, Kiran Kulung and Uttam Khatri finish the Oxfam Trailwalker 2014 in 11 hours and 56 minutes.

Kulung, a porter and a farmer, have both participated in the race for the previous three years. All have participated and placed well in various races in Nepal. It is Bhattachan's third year coaching a Nepali team in the race.

Bhattachan and his runners are happy with their results. "This is my third participation in Oxfam Trailwalker," said team captain Khatri, "but this year we retained the crown, it is one of the happy moments of my trailrunning experience." They also hope that their victory in a tough international race will provide motivation for up-and-coming runners in Nepal.

Though Hong Kong's hills pale in comparison to Nepal's towering Himalayas, the hills of Hong

Kong's Trailwalker are not for the faint of heart. Race participants climb around 20 hills over the course of the race, the highest of which is 957 meters, gaining approximately 5,000 meters in elevation.

When runners are not climbing hills, they run across terrain that varies from beach sand to pavement to jungle paths. As this year's race kicked off on Friday morning, the heat and high humidity added an extra challenge for the racers.

Race organisers recommend three months of training to complete the difficult race. The Nepali team spent about that much time training in the hills around Pokhara which clearly paid off.

"Trailwalker is an amazing challenge for a trail runner," said Richard Kimber, a Hong Kong based runner who ran Trailwalker in 2010 and has competed in dozens of marathons and ultramarathons. "The elevation gain and loss of the trail is unrelenting. For teams to crack the 12 hour mark they really have no option but to just keep hammering every section, whether

uphill or down, however tired they may be feeling."

The race began as a Gurkha training exercise in Hong Kong, when in 1981 the Brigade of Gurkhas mapped out the original course across Hong Kong's Maclehoose Trail. In 1986, Oxfam became a co-organiser of the race and opened it to public participation. The Gurkha teams, accustomed to Nepal's mountainous terrain, continued to dominate the race.

The Gurkhas officially bid farewell to Hong Kong with the United Kingdom's handover of the territory back to China in 1997, but not before winning the 1996 race. The Nepali victory this year marks a return of the dominance of Nepalis in Hong Kong's original Gurkha race.

Bhattachan is already thinking about next year's race. "I will bring a team and come for the 2015 Trailwalker Race and try to complete a hat trick." 🇳🇵

 nepalitimes.com

■ The inspiration of a long-distance runner, #731
■ Run Maya run, #662

A MOST WANTED MAN

Earlier this year, the world lost a great actor with the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman. With him died the possibility of bringing to life countless future roles laced with the complexity and depth that Hoffman was known for.



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

Few other living actors are capable of doing the same. A lesser known but particularly commendable detail of Hoffman's life is his intense involvement in theater - a result of his rigorous training as an thespian from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Acting program and an unusual immersion for a Hollywood actor figuring in the leading roles of films like *Capote* (2005), and *Doubt* (2008) which, in my mind, may have been forgettable without his nuanced performances. With *A Most Wanted Man*, a quiet but stunning thriller directed by Anton Corbijn and adapted by Andrew Bovell from a John le Carré novel of the same name, we have Philip Seymour Hoffman in his final great role as Günther Bachmann, a highly trained German spy based in Hamburg



and running a team of operatives focused on sussing out possible terrorist threats through contacts in the local Muslim community. Joined by a strong and diverse cast including an unknown Grigoriy Dobrygin as Issa Karpov, a quiet bearded young Chechen refugee who enters Germany illegally; Rachel McAdams, a romantic comedy favourite who departs from playing her usual sweetself to play the ethical but cornered immigration lawyer, Annabel Richter; Willem Dafoe plays Tommy Brue, a crooked but kindly banker who once laundered money for Issa's violent Russian father; and last but clearly not least Robin Wright as the quiet but iron willed Martha Sullivan, an enigmatic American diplomatic

attaché who appears to be on Bachmann's side. As with the more sophisticated films about terrorism, there are many grey areas in this film, all of which are tackled with finesse by Corbijn and his skilled actors. Hoffman is quietly unforgettable as a tubby, whiskey drinking, flask toting Bachmann, the once golden child of the German espionage world, now struggling to regain his reputation after an obliquely referred to past debacle. Instinctively aligned with Bachmann's underlying integrity, we struggle to understand if Issa Karpov is who he says he is, an innocent in possession of a huge, dirty fortune caught up in an ugly world of suspicion that now surrounds almost every bearded Muslim, or a sophisticated terrorist with the worst of intentions. As Bachman and Richter struggle to separate Karpov from his money in an attempt to catch the real Al Qaeda sympathisers who funnel funds from Europe to the Middle East through effective but byzantine methods, we too are caught up in a moral and ethical struggle, one that will haunt us long after the final searing scenes of this powerful, but deeply troubling film.

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■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



KUMAR SHRESTHA/RSS

DOUBLE CHECK: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Federal Affairs and Local Development Prakash Man Singh inspects Rani Pokhari prior to the SAARC summit on Tuesday.



AYESHA SHAKYA

SHOWSTOPPER: Former Miss Universe and Bollywood actress Sushmita Sen walks the ramp for the Classic Diamond Jewellery Fashion Show at Hotel Annapurna on Saturday.



EMBASSY OF INDIA, KATHMANDU

CINE TALK: (R-L) Indian actors Seema Biswas and Sushmita Mukherjee with Abhay Kumar from the Indian embassy and Karishma Manandhar at the 21st edition of Voices at the Nepal Bharat Library on Monday.



LUKE PENDER

THE PANELISTS: (L-R) Tshering Lama of Childreach Nepal, producer Jane Charles, director Jeffrey Brown, former regional director of UNIFEM South Asia Chandni Joshi, photographer Lisa Kristine and Sunita Dunwar of Shakti Samuha attend a panel discussion after a private screening of Brown's *Sold* at Kumari Hall on Tuesday.

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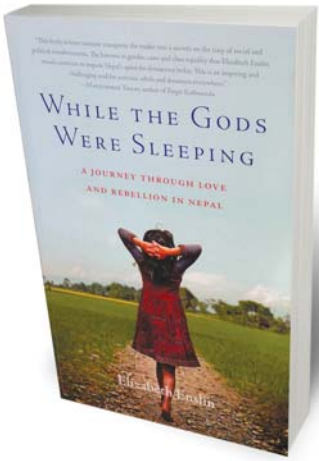
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Personal anthropology



While the Gods Were Sleeping
A Journey Through Love and Rebellion in Nepal
by Elizabeth Enslin
Seal Press, 2014
Paperback, 312 pages

While a graduate student in anthropology at Stanford, Elizabeth Enslin meets fellow student Promod Parajuli from Nepal and falls in love. Enslin had wanted to study African culture, and had romanticised about working there but romance takes her to Nepal instead. She follows Parajuli to India researching education and the grassroots movement. They briefly visit Parajuli's family in Nepal after which they return to the US, get married and finish their studies. They travel back to South Asia, and while Promod goes to India to continue his research, Enslin, pregnant with their first child, stays back with Promod's family in Nepal. She is not just a daughter-in-law; she is learning and experiencing Nepal's Brahmin culture up close and personal. As her sociological imagination takes over, you can almost see Enslin taking notes about caste and kinship as her husband's family goes about its daily chores in a remote Chitwan village. Although her in-laws are welcoming

and gracious, Elizabeth is still considered culturally impure and is therefore not allowed into the kitchen to cook rice. She feels her outsider status acutely, and often wonders what she is doing there. Her anthropologist mind admonishes her for following her man to this remote corner of the world. But it is as if her marriage, her life as a Brahmin wife, daughter-in-law and mother are all extensions of an academic fieldtrip, the results of which are documented in her book *While the Gods Were Sleeping*. Enslin is interested in why and how women rebel at the local level. She interviews Nepali women who dare to strike out and speak out, and also women who are oppressed by class, caste and tradition. She investigates the cultural roots of domestic violence, the dowry system, child marriage and other manifestations of patriarchy. She records local women's songs and poems on poverty, gender, inequality and political oppression and translates songs of defiance sung at Tij

and Ratauli. She interviews women who join the literacy classes initiated by her and the Parajulis. Amma, Enslin's mother-in-law, plays a central and inspiring role in questioning the traditional place women are supposed to keep in society and family. Enslin finds her academic interest veering towards analysing how women organise, and the life stories of women rebels. Enslin's pregnancy and her decision to deliver at home forms a significant portion of *While the Gods Were Sleeping*. There are complications with the delivery and she is rushed to Bharatpur Hospital. Enslin wonders how many mothers in Nepal, or even Chitwan, have that option. The book is divided into three parts: a personal memoir about the early days after her marriage, the initial culture shock of being in Nepal, and the challenges of an aspiring anthropologist with the political backdrop of the last days of the Panchayat

and a stirring democracy movement. Enslin's academic background makes the narrative dry and observational, and she doesn't intrude in person unless necessary which gives the book a somewhat academic tone. It could have been more interesting for the lay reader if there was more personal reflections on the relationships within the family and community. Enslin has chosen to write more about Amma, and less about her relationship and life with Promod. The timeframe of the book is 1980s-90s, and Nepal has changed dramatically since then. So, readers looking at more contemporary trends in gender relations, community activism, the role of mothers' groups and female health volunteers in public health awareness will be disappointed. Enslin gives non-Nepalis a glimpse of the real Nepal, and for Nepalis the outsider's view gives us a unique perspective about our own country, society and families, and how much things have changed in the past 25 years. Sonia Awale

REVIEW

I love bread. On any given day I'd rather eat bread than rice, which always comes as sounding sacrilegious to my friends. Maybe it is something to do with having spent most of my childhood in boarding school where one had to spend better half of the meal hunting out the weevils that were cooked alongside the rice- who had the time to chuck those nasty little bugs out, right? Or who knows what those nuns were thinking- that it builds character, moral fortitude or were maybe just trying to up our protein intake. Whatever it may be - it left me with a noncommittal attitude to rice. Bread on the other hand is the best. It goes wonderfully with everything. Or maybe it is just the fact that I love biting into a nice warm chunk of yeasty bun- the simplicity and uncomplicatedness of it providing comfort and succor on even the worst kind of I-hate-myself days. My idea of heaven includes a little bakery with shelves stocked with loaves fresh from the bakers oven-wholewheat, multigrain, crusty, plaited, cheese topped, whole grain, white sliced, unsliced, with poppy seeds, sugared, rustic chunks perfect for dunking into a bowl of hot minestrone soup or



Baker's Den

PICS: RUBY TUESDAY

simply torn apart and dipped into a hot cup of chiya and quickly slurped before it disintegrates and sinks to the bottom of the cup. And that brings me to Baker's Den. The bakery is smack opposite the original BhatBhateni Supermarket in Gairidhara and its shelves are always well-stocked with a variety of breads. They are also renowned for their cakes, though I have yet

to sample those. The bakery is large and spacious and is minimalistic in design- relying on lighting to create the changing ambience as the day progresses. Cool clear and business-like during the day with all the light flooding in from outside, in the evenings it changes itself into a warm yellow lit cocoon. Baker's Den is in my neighbourhood and I've been a loyal customer since it first opened its doors a few years ago. But I usually rush in; pick up a variety of bread, patties and pastries- both savoury and sweet and rush out. Rarely do I linger for a meal but this time I did and I think I may just have discovered my new favourite sandwich joint.

I had the multigrain foot long, with a romesco spread, basil pesto dressing dribbled on my crunchy vegetables, caramelised onions and sundried tomatoes, chicken salami and cheese sandwich. The romesco sauce is a nut and pepper based sauce that injects piquancy and life into the rest of the ingredients. It is tasty, satisfying and very filling. Also at Rs 499 it is an amazing bargain because you can ask them to cut it in two, share it with your date and voila, you've probably just enjoyed one of the cheapest lunch dates to be had in town. I didn't think it fair to base my review on just the one sandwich so I ordered the Orange and Blueberry panna cotta (Rs 160) which was light and decent- just ok. But maybe I am to blame for I like my panna cotta thick and creamy and this was more gelatinous than anything. But I've been told that their tiramisu (made only when fresh, high quality mascarpone is available) is delicious, so there's another reason for me to go and linger at their tables. Ruby Tuesday

How to get there: Baker's Den is right opposite the original Bhat Bhateni Supermarket gate in Gairidhara.



Three hundred metres to Everest

In 1924, climbers Edward Norton and Howard Somervell, part of the second British-Everest Expedition which also included George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, set on a mission to become the



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

first to summit Everest. But due to exhaustion and breathlessness, the duo had to turn back even though they were only 300 metres away from the top. The difficulty in breathing at such high altitudes is captured in many documentaries where the excessive panting of the climber forms the dominant noise in the background. This panting is bad enough even with supplemental oxygen.



The Britishers may have failed to summit Everest that day, but their ability to go that far without proper equipment and gear, speaks immensely of their strength, endurance and mountaineering skill. It took another 28 years for Everest to be summited for the first time in 1953 by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary. But, it was only in 1978 that Italians Reinhold Messner and Peter

Habeler (pic) became the first to reach the summit without supplemental oxygen. Why did it take so long for climbers to successfully climb the last 300 metres of Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen? Many scientists of the day believed it was impossible for a person to reach the top of Everest without bottled oxygen, as the body would have reached its point of exhaustion and even taking a

single step would be impossible. This conclusion arose from the maximum oxygen uptake which determines the level of fitness of a person. However Messner and Habeler proved the calculations wrong. There was however one little-known Scottish high altitude physiologist and climber, Alexander Kellas, who thought otherwise. Based on his studies and observations, Kellas went on record to say that Everest could be climbed with supplemental oxygen. But that was not all. He went further and remarked that climbing Everest may be possible even without supplemental oxygen. Few believed him at the time. In his famous treatise on *A consideration of the Possibility of Ascending Mount Everest* (written around 1912), Kellas notes that for the last 1000 ft of the Everest climb, the ascent rate would be around 300 ft per hour. In fact the rate of climb in the last 1000 ft by

Messner and Habeler in 1978 was almost the exact as what Kellas had predicted decades ago. Overpowering hypothermia (cold temperatures) and hypoxia (lack of adequate oxygen) are other reasons why people thought Everest couldn't be climbed. One can imagine how severely cold it must be in the Everest region and what little protection against the cold tweed jackets and hobnail boots (worn by climbers of the time) would provide. In addition, supplemental oxygen equipment of that time was very cumbersome and difficult to use. Many of them were designed so that you could only use them while resting. Norton and Somervell were not only excellent climbers but also outstanding human beings. Norton went on to become the governor of Hong Kong, and Somervell gave up a promising career as a surgeon in England to become a medical missionary in South India. 🇮🇳

GIZMO by YANTRICK

The grand theft

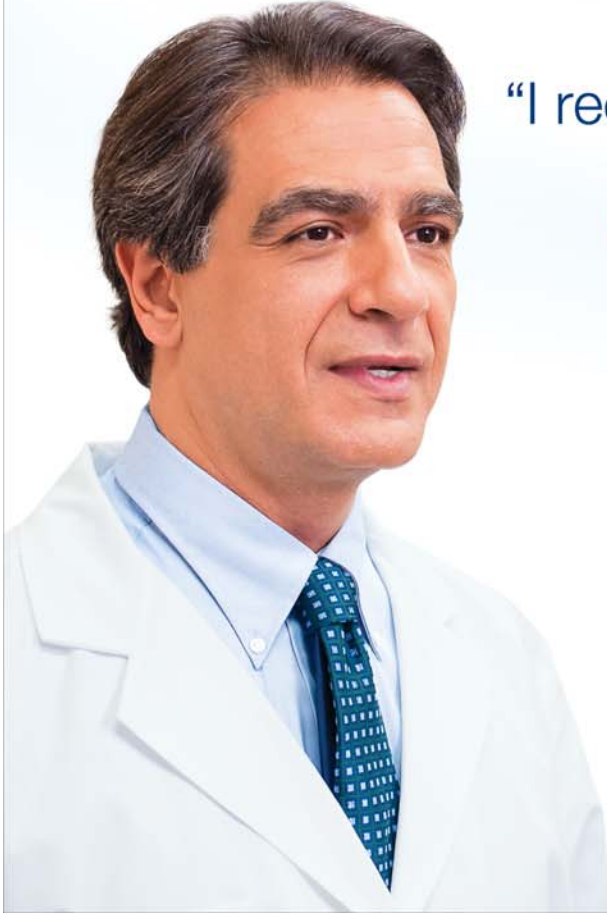
The title that the next-generation gaming console owners have been waiting for has finally arrived. Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V) is here and if you own a PS4 or an Xbox One or have a friend who has one, you can kiss the sunshine goodbye, well for at least a couple of days, because that's just how good the game is. While GTA V was already available on the PS3 and Xbox 360 platforms, all that enhanced computing and processing power on the PS4 and the Xbox One gives the title a truly next generation look and feel. Make your way through the fictional city of Los Santos to realise just what I am talking about. Boasting production values and budget



that would put even Hollywood blockbusters to shame, Los Santos City was one of the most stunning and convincing open-world environments to have ever graced a video game. And, in its new higher-resolution avatar, it is even more spectacular. Compared to the last-gen versions, the new GTA V is noticeably sharper; textures resolutions have been bumped, surfaces appear bumpier, and there are a raft of new particle, light, and lens effects. The attention to details is amazing. Cruise down to the beach in your stolen convertible and you can see the tiny sands whoosh by. Amazing! Drive around in the rain for hours on end, marveling at the beautifully rendered raindrops and puddles on the ground. Bicycles, motorcycles, cars, motorboats, helicopters, planes- whatever tickles your fancy- GTA V has got them all, and when you do finally stop admiring the


scenery to cause some GTA-style destruction, the sheer amount of guns and explosives at your disposal will only result in more fascination with the game. For the first time in the GTA series, gamers have the option of playing from the perspective of the character they are controlling and that is a good thing. Rather than the third-person view that the previous GTA iterations have followed, playing the game in first person mode breathes new life into the game. If multiplayer online play is your thing, then GTA V has got that covered too. You can now wage war with real-life counterparts from around the globe. GTA V is available for Rs 7,000. 🇮🇳

Yantrick's Verdict: Call in sick, cancel all your plans, warn your missus because GTA V will turn you into a gaming zombie.

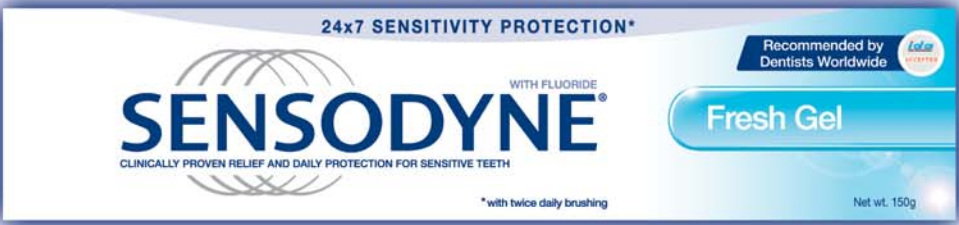


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JOHNNIE WALKER. 

LUKE PENDER
in NEPALGANJ

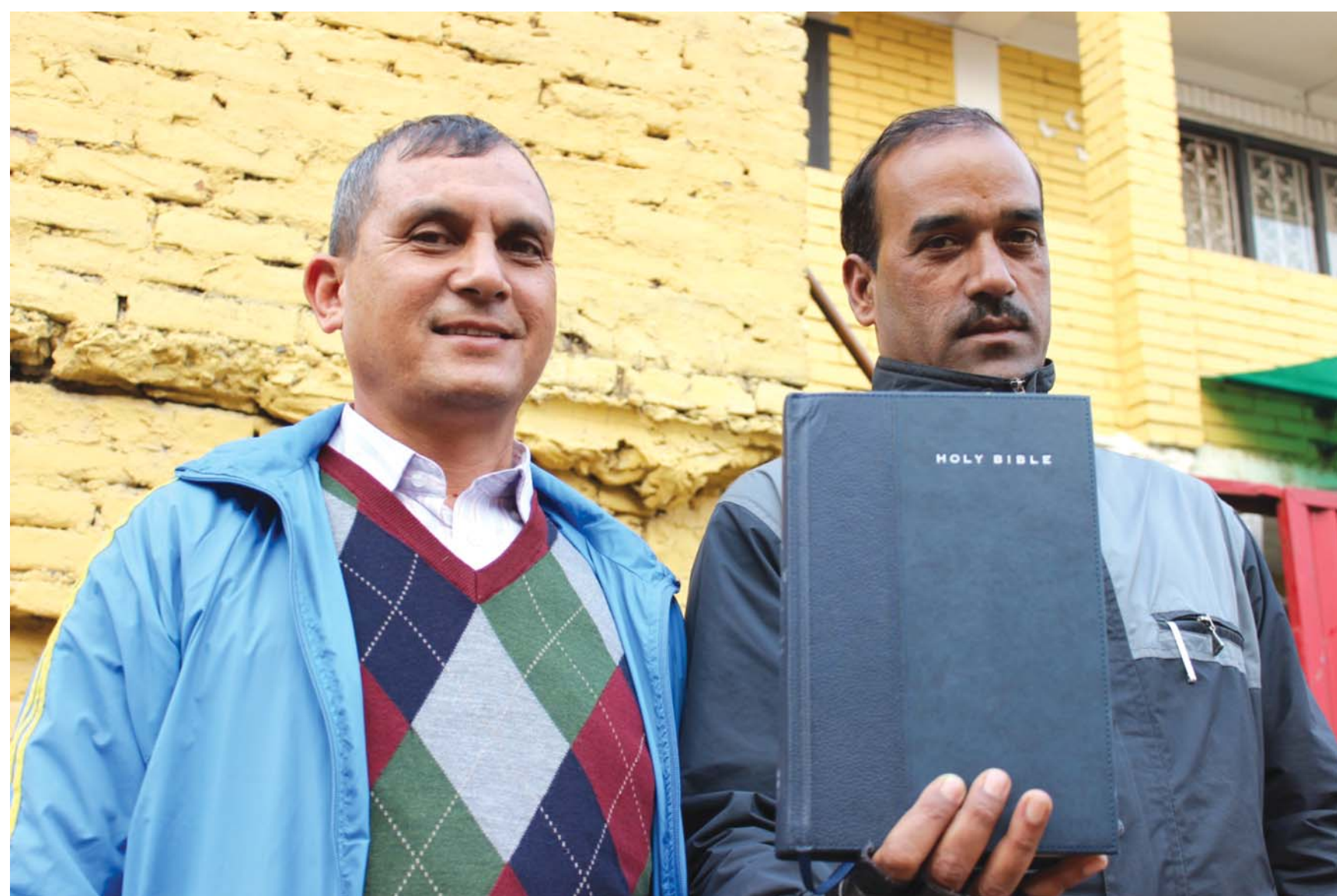
Prakash Basnet joined the Royal Nepal Army in 1988 during the days of the monarchy. But by 2001, the national army was drawn into the conflict against Maoist guerrillas, and Basnet worked in the military's intelligence unit.

Till he left the army in 2004, Prakash saw his fair share of carnage. This was the period when the violence escalated with widespread human rights violations, torture, summary executions, and disappearances.

During the war, many Maoist prisoners would be brought in for questioning at army bases. Prakash remembers caring for them. He would also preach to them and often make friends with them, keeping in touch with those who survived even after the conflict ended eight years ago.

Between 2001-2004 Prakash's orders were to work undercover to infiltrate Maoist units and to bring the information to the Army. However, by this time Basnet had become a Christian and he was appalled by the violence he saw all around him. So instead of gathering information, he would try to preach non-violence and spread the word of God among the Maoist guerrillas he had infiltrated.

"As a Christian, I felt it was my duty to set an example to people about peace, and about the future," Prakash said in an interview in Nepalganj last week. He managed to convert about 15 Maoists and put the faith of Jesus



LUKE PENDER

Preaching the gospel to guerrillas

Ex-soldiers build peace by turning former enemies to follow the word of Jesus Christ

Christ in them, even while the war was still going on.

None of the guerrillas Prakash converted died during the war, and they also tried to abstain from violence during the conflict as a result of the Christian message. He says they told him: "You are right, brother, war is bad."

In 2004, Prakash retired from the Army and joined the Maoists and his triple life did present problems. He was an ex-soldier who was now in the guerrilla army, but he was also a Christian who firmly believed in the

commandment, 'thou shalt not kill'.

"The Maoists would sometimes ambush soldiers, and I had the chance to kill, too, but I never did," Prakash recalls. He tried to talk his fellow-guerrillas out of killing as well. "I told them, killing would never fix the problem and would never bring unity among Nepalis," he said.

After the ceasefire, Prakash continued his work among the Maoists with Pastor Indra Basnet, who also converted and retired from the Army to form

the Military and Police Christian Fellowship which is inspired by the line in Galatians Chapter 3:28: 'There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Today, the fellowship has a membership of 500 retired and serving security personnel from across Nepal. Indra recalls that during the conflict there were Maoists so fired up with the love of Jesus that they were going to the guerrilla camps to preach the Gospel.

Pastor Indra was a sergeant



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THE WORD OF GOD: Pastor Indra Basnet (*left*) and Prakash Basnet both retired from the Army and converted to Christianity. Prakash went on to join the Maoists and convinced many guerrillas to believe in the gospel and the path of peace.

in the Royal Nepal Army from 1976 to 1996, the year that the conflict began in the mid-western mountains. He says the message from the Bible is still relevant because there are now longer no those who support the Maoist or the government. “We are all one now,” he says, “we are all brothers.”

Four years ago, Pastor Indra held a ‘forgiveness conference’ which Prakash Basnet also attended with fellow-Maoists. “They came to forgive and ask for forgiveness on behalf of the Maoists, and I did the same on the Army’s behalf,” Indra recalls.

Soon after, nearly 1,500 ex-guerrillas were integrated into the national army. Pastor Indra says this didn’t just happen due to political accommodation, but also because of divine intervention.

“God answered our prayers with the integration,” Indra says.

Both men look back at the horror of war and agree that Nepalis should never have to go through such violence and brutality again. Their only concern is that although the people are at peace, the leaders are still threatening to go back to war.

Asked what drew him to Christianity while he was in the Army, Prakash remembers that his colleagues loved to party and drink. “They had many bad habits, and one day a civilian came to our home and read us from the bible. After that I accepted God and started going to church.”

From that day on, Prakash says things changed for him, and so did the priorities in his life. “Before, my friends in both the Army and among the Maoists wanted revenge and to kill. Afterwards, when I saw in them a change of heart, I knew this would be my mission in life.”



DEEPAK GYAWALI / PEOPLE AFTER WAR



From vigilantism to spiritualism

Murari Kusuwaha turns to God to atone for his violent past

DEEPAK GYAWALI
in NAWALPARASI

He used to wear an ammunition belt around his neck, now he wears a sacred thread. He used to carry a shotgun, now he carries a trident. He used to be a vigilante, now he is a holy man.

During the conflict, Murari Kusuwaha (*pic*) used to have a nom de guerre of ‘Pahalman’, now he calls himself Sadhu Omkar Das. Instead of training villagers to be vigilantes, he now performs fire ceremonies for peace.

“I don’t want to remember the past,” says Kusuwaha, emerging from morning prayers. “I used to be enveloped in darkness, now I have seen the light.”

Kusuwaha was the leader of a vigilante group that the Royal Nepal Army set up in border districts like Nawalparasi, paying and training locals to hunt down Maoist guerrillas. Vigilantes committed gross human rights violations, killing many innocent people and pillaging villages. Kusuwaha himself says he killed “many” Maoists.

“I don’t know how many Maoists I killed,” Kusuwaha

admits, “but all that is over now. I don’t want to remember it.”

Kusuwaha needs a lot of prodding to recall his past. After his father and five relatives were killed by a gang from India, Murari armed himself to take revenge. He eventually tracked down and killed his father’s killers.

He initially joined the Maoists, but was soon put off by their extortion of poor farmers from his village. His band of armed men then started chasing Maoists and were recruited by the Army to operate in Kapilbastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi.

Kusuwaha was on the Maoist hit list, and the guerrillas tried to kill him many times. In 2005, they massacred 12 farmers in Bargadahawa of Nawalparasi, where they thought Kusuwaha’s group was having a meeting.

Today, Kusuwaha has even converted his former bodyguard, Om Prakash Gupta, to renounce violence. Both are now vegetarians, and spend hours everyday in meditation and prayer. The walls of Kusuwaha’s house are festooned with images of Hindu deities.

Kusuwaha is building a temple in his village of Paklihawa near the Indian border and says he wants his former adversaries, the Maoists, to also follow the path of spiritual enlightenment.

Kusuwaha’s wife, Manju, is happy with her husband’s transformation. She says: “He has given up violence, now he is a good man.”

साप्ताहिक खबरपत्रिका

हिमाल

ग्राहक योजना

१ कार्तिकदेखि

३ वर्षे

ग्राहक शुल्क रु ५२५० मा नगद छुट रु २५०

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हिमाल

हरेक आइतबार

What was in it for us?

Jhalak Subedi in *Kantipur*,
15 November

कान्तिपुर

If World War I hadn't happened, the world would have been different today. In Russia, Lenin's October Revolution probably wouldn't have happened, and the ideology of communism wouldn't have spread globally. If there hadn't been a Soviet Union, Mao wouldn't have been able to complete his revolution. If there was no Mao, there wouldn't have been a Maoist armed struggle in Nepal. The ideas perhaps would be there, but history would have unfolded differently.

The involvement of Nepali Gurkha soldiers in the British Army linked us to the war. On 24 April 2015, it will be 200 years since the first recruitment of Gurkhas by the British. One hundred years before World War I, Nepali soldiers were already fighting for the British. It is estimated that there were 200,000 Nepali young men in the British Army at that time – about 20 per cent of the hill population of Nepal at the time. Some 20,000 Nepali soldiers died in that war. Many did not return to Nepal, and statistics show a drastic fall in Nepal's population between the two wars. Entire villages were without people. Prime Minister Chandra Sumshere also sent 16,000 troops to India to replace the ones who went to the front. He also donated Rs 10 million for the British war effort. The British gave Nepal one rifle for each soldier, the country was therefore awash with guns. There were some benefits to Nepal.



YARD BY YARD: British Gurkha soldiers take over a trench during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in France during World War I.

In 1923, in return for the help during the war, Britain signed a peace and friendship treaty, accepting Nepal as a sovereign nation as well as providing Rs 1 million annually which the Ranas and their descendants put into their own pockets.

The war had an impact on Nepali society and economy as well. Families with sons killed in action got some cash. Some 100,000 soldiers came back and brought back Indian currency worth Rs 130 million in salaries – about the same amount as the annual budget at the time. The price of property shot up. They brought back English manners and eating

habits. Many Nepalis stayed abroad and never came back extending the Nepali diaspora, those who did returned with new ideas. The soldiers also brought back bad habits like cigarettes, cards and gambling, and alcohol addiction. The shortage of young men encouraged women to marry across caste and ethnic lines.

But in hindsight, it is clear that Nepal never learnt its lesson from World War I. We didn't have any enemies in that war. There was no reason for us to fight in it. Our national interest lay in preserving our sovereignty, but our rulers took the country to war to protect their own power. They served as middlemen for foreigners. Instead of setting up industries, manufacturing and jobs in our own country, they sent our young men to fight and die for someone else. This tradition continues to this day. The 'brave Gurkha' became a slogan for the country. In those days Nepali men died for the British Army, now they toil in the Gulf.

In 1911, before the start of the war, King George V came to Nepal, and our rulers arranged an elaborate welcome with a hunting expedition. This is all very similar to the way we are preparing to welcome Narendra Modi. We are still trying to appease foreign powers, there hasn't been much of a change in our mentality.

Jhalak Subedi is the author of Belayati Samrajyaka Nepali Mohara.

nepalitimes.com
■ 100 years of platitudes, #688

Prachanda's safe house

Narendra KC, *pahilopost.com*, 15 November

पहिलो पोस्ट

During a recent visit to his party's former headquarter in Rangsi, Rukum, Prachanda appeared nostalgic. The house on the foothills of Dadagaun, a Magar village, was where the Maoist leader mapped out strategies for his revolution.

"I commanded the whole war from here and it is this village that led the country towards democracy," said Prachanda last week.

For years the Maoist moved their headquarters from place to place, including across the border to India. But when top leaders including CP Gajurel and Mohan Baidya got arrested, the party felt the need to provide their commander a safe house within the country. The responsibility fell onto Nanda Kishore Pun aka Comrade Pasang's hands.

"I felt my village would be the safest place," says Pasang who was a popular and skilled commander during the war. Pasang's own home was only few houses away from the headquarter.



The house in Rangsi was attacked by the Nepal Army ten months later. By then, the Maoist had already moved the centre to Gorigaun in Rangkot, acting on a tipoff. Bullet holes still riddle the walls of the house.

Because this is the place where the war gained momentum, and also where the peace process began, Prachanda said Rolpa was where he feels the most at home. He said he had come here to rejuvenate himself. He wants to turn the house into a 'war museum'.

On his trip, the Maoist leader travelled to historically significant places including Holer, where the Maoists launched their armed struggle on 13 February 1996, and Losewang, where in 2006 CPN UML leaders Bam Dev Gautam and Yuvraj Gyawali held talks with the Maoists and agreed on to go ahead with the historic 12-point peace deal. He also travelled to Ghartigaun where the last big battle took place with the army.

No sacrifice

Govinda Tandon of the Pashupati Development Trust in *Annapurna Post*, 17 November

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

Many distortions have sullied the great philosophy of tolerance, non-violence and humanity that is inherent in the Hindu religion. Unfortunately, many superstitious rituals that have nothing to do with Hinduism have now come to be regarded as part of this great faith. Among the distortions of Hinduism is the practice of animal sacrifice. We think we can earn divine merit by killing and sacrificing to the gods innocent animals that trust us to protect them. Our conscience tells us it is wrong, yet we continue with mass sacrifices of animals. No Hindu text or god and goddess has ever asked for appeasement by sacrifice. It is us selfish human beings who have transformed the gods into blood-thirsty ogres.

The Gadhimai Festival of Bara district is starting on Monday, in the next ten days there will be thousands of animals that will be slaughtered there. A thousand people have been hired to do the killing, tenders have been floated for the leather and meat. The sacrifice is being driven by the leather industry mafia, it has nothing to do with religion. The priest of the Gadimai Temple himself is against the sacrifices. So whose interest does this blood-letting serve? Who benefits from turning a place of worship into a slaughterhouse? Publicity about the sacrifices has tarnished Nepal's image internationally. The following steps are necessary to immediately outlaw religious sacrifices:

- The state should stop subsidising animal sacrifice.
- Animal sacrifices at government buildings, vehicles and aircraft should be stopped.
- Ban import of animals from India 15-20 days before festival
- Ban transport of animals from other parts of Nepal to Gadhimai
- Spread message against animal sacrifices through mass media
- Government should proactively spread the message that animal sacrifice is not religion



Policeman: This is Modi's route, you cannot sit here.

Beggar: Who will sit here then? Our prime minister?

कान्तिपुर

Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 15 November

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The Chairman is busy playing politics. ”

NC leader Ram Chandra Paudel on PDCC Chairman Baburam Bhattarai in *Nagarik*, 18 November



RESETTLED: Jitu Basnet at his shack in the refugee camp in Beldange, Nepal (*left*), and with his students in America (*top*).

Bhutan footballers in US

Gopal Gartaula in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-22 November

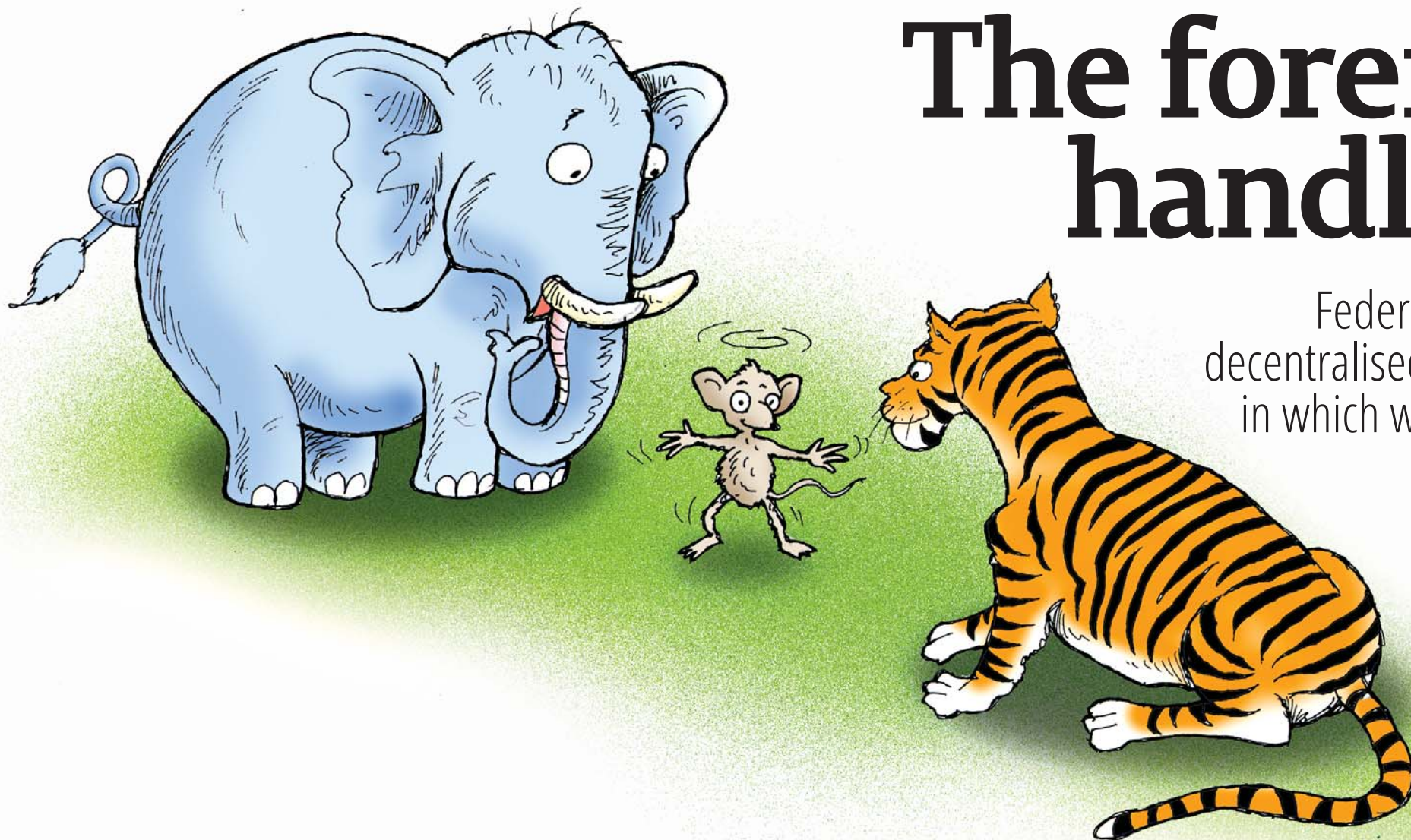
हिमाल

Jitu Basnet was born in Lapsibote in southern Bhutan 34 years ago, and spent 18 years at the refugee camp in Beldange of Jhapa district. He loved football, and got to play in various clubs in eastern Nepal. But it was after he was resettled in Tennessee in the United States five years ago that he really blossomed as a football player and coach. He got his referee license from the US Soccer Foundation three years ago and regularly referees games and coaches football teams in Nashville. He now has a car,

house and a country – things he didn't have in the refugee camp. In a happy coincidence, Basnet's assistant coach in Nashville is Purna Khawas, who is also a former refugee from Bhutan. As boys, the two played football barefoot in the muddy fields of Beldange in Nepal. The two have organised football matches in 35 cities in 22 states in the US. And every June, they also organise football matches between Bhutanese teams in the US. Next June, they hope to have 40 teams competing and will raise the \$50,000 to organise it from former refugees resettled in the US.

The foreign handlers

Federalism is just decentralised feudalism in which warlords will rule states



BIHARI K SHRESTHA

By briefing the diplomatic community in Nepal about the status of constitution drafting on 12 November, the government tried to draw the international community into some sort of partnership in its exercise, and put pressure on the opposition.

The ambassadors then went into a huddle at the United Nations office in Pulchok in which the participants reportedly sought the position of Nepal's two closest neighbours, India and China, on the issue. However, the diplomats seem to have been diplomatic about their viewpoints, and nothing tangible seems to have come out of the event, proving the point that a diplomat is a person who thinks twice before saying nothing.

Meanwhile, the opposition composed of the UCPN(M) and other 21 littler parties, have also gone running to the diplomatic community to ask for a meeting to brief them on their stance. The diplomats have therefore effectively been catapulted to the pedestal of being the most effective arbiter in the federalisation debate in Nepal.

On federalisation, the main stumbling block in the constitution, they decided to say nothing. The tragedy in all this, of course, is that federalism was never a demand of the Nepali people. It was imposed first by the Maoists for want of a better people-oriented agenda, and then a section of Madhesi leaders who seem to be striving to drive a wedge between the Madhesi people and the rest of the country. Both have been at a loss of words to explain how federalism would benefit Nepal's underserved.

It is clear that we need to address historical exclusion, but

future federal provinces will be dominated by the same warlords who want autonomy from Kathmandu to continue with the plunder. Federalism is just decentralised feudalism.

To add insult to injury, the entire approach to federalisation is in the hands of politicians conspicuously devoid of academic and intellectual capacity. Which is why they are always lying, threatening each other, throwing tantrums and sulking.

Given the history of their role in getting us to their point, the international community cannot suddenly wash their hands off. Despite decades of foreign aid, the country continues to suffer widespread poverty, caste and ethnic discrimination, inequality, unemployment, poor health and education. A nouveau riche was fattened by creaming aid and wallowing in corruption.

However, thanks to donor support for human resource development in government, Nepal in 1980s was able to make two major innovations in the forestry and health sectors through devolution of authority to forest user groups and mothers' groups respectively. Genuine decentralised decision-making helped Nepal achieve its two biggest success stories: community forestry and progress in mother-infant survival.

But the tragedy is that neither of these innovations were attempted for replication in the donors' own programs. UNDP and DANIDA remain the most notorious for their bid to outdo each other in appropriating the ownership of Nepal's decentralisation initiative. They inadvertently ended up vitiating the potent role of user groups in the Local Governance Act of 1999 that has gone on to spawn rampant corruption in the local bodies that we see today.

However, when it comes to Nepal's politics, some major international players are more directly implicated. Nepal's political parties need not be accountable to the Nepali people because they know that, given our hopeless mimicry of the Westminster model, Nepali voters have no option but to elect the same politicians to power over and over again by turns. But the leaders are genuinely afraid of foreign interlocutors, most of whom are materially helpful to them,

some even able to seat or unseat them.

Nepal's rulers were beholden to foreign powers, and they still are. Several recent books have confirmed that the federalism project was chaperoned by foreign handlers through the Maoists and Madhesi parties. Some donors used their inclusion portfolios to actively support NGOs, which have now become political parties pushing for ethnic federalism.

Whatever they may say diplomatically about Nepal's

'internal affairs', regional and international powers enjoy enormous influence over the current constitution-making process.

Since they were so much a part of it, they can't now say 'it's up to the Nepalis themselves' to clean up the mess. They must back a democratic constitution that devolves authority to the grassroots, and defer federalisation until an objective study confirms that it will ensure a more inclusive and accelerated development. 🇳🇵

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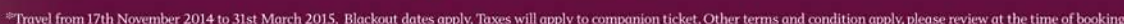
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