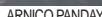


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Three novice monks ritually seek alms on the streets of Patan on Thursday, which was also Losar for the Sherpa and Tibetan people.



Three international conferences in Kathmandu this month aim at reducing black carbon emissions to mitigate glacial retreat and protect public health.

PAGE 6

The government forms commissions on truth and disappearances, but victims families are not satisfied with provision for amnesty. Meanwhile, in London, the trial of Col Lama is set to resume next month.

GADFLY BY **DAVID SEDDON** | **ANALYSIS** BY **OM ASTHA RAI**

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CHINA DAILY 中国日报
ASIA WEEKLY

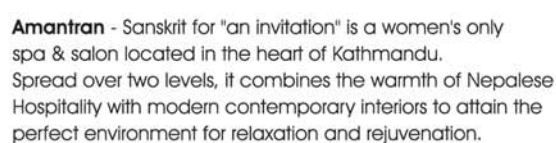
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CLEARING THE AIR

An international conference in Kathmandu this week on Brick Kilns Policy and Advocacy could not have been held in a more appropriate venue. Delegates from around the world discussing the social and environmental cost of the industry, looked out through the windows at a vista blighted by brick factories. What used to be bucolic terrace farms across the Valley have turned into an ochre dust bowl where ant-like men women and children toil alongside mules carrying bricks to be fired in furnaces.

Bricks are very much in the news these days. A report in *The Guardian* last week spotlighted the working conditions of brick kiln workers in Nepal, especially children. Entire families work in these kilns, and the children help their parents just as they would lend a helping hand in the farms back home. Although the job is seasonal and hazardous, income for the families of kiln workers is better than many other rural professions.

The underlying reason for poor working conditions of brick workers, however, is the same as that for migrant workers being cheated by fellow-Nepali recruiters, or young women being sold to brothels by their own relatives. It is also why a transportation cartel doesn't care to improve bus services and fixes prices. All a result of governance failure, weak regulation, political protection of organised criminals, impunity and the lack of accountability.

The solution, therefore, has to be structural, not piecemeal. It lies in mustering the necessary political will to be responsive to the health and environmental concerns of communities. When greed and selfishness become a part of the job description of politicians, it may be unrealistic to expect the public interest to suddenly take precedence.

We may have to wait for rulers to finally realise that the lack of action is affecting their own health and the well being of their offspring. For example, when London's



KUNDA DIXIT

Efforts to mitigate long-term climate change are well and good, but we need much more urgent efforts closer to home to clean up.

Thames River had turned into a sewer 100 years ago, politicians acted only because the stink made it impossible for parliament to sit. Or, only when elderly politicians started dying of respiratory failure caused by pollution from coal burning did British legislators pass the Clean Air Act.

There will also come a time when pollution in Kathmandu Valley will get so bad it will shorten the lifespan of the capital's residents, including policy-makers in Singha Darbar. That is when they may act, but don't bet on it. Enlightened self-interest was never one of the hallmarks of our rulers.

Nepal's prolonged political transition and the inability

to hold local elections for nearly two decades has made local and national politicians less accountable, encouraged patronage and the protection of the construction mafia. The result is the plunder of the Chure, illegal sand mining, boulder exports, bus and tanker cartels holding the public hostage, and brick kilns that flout labour and environmental laws.

This month, Nepal is showcasing its failures in a series of international conferences organised by ICIMOD and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to look at how soot particles from brick kilns, crop burning, vehicle emissions and other chemicals are not just affecting the people's health and hurting farmers, but also accelerating global warming and glacial retreat in the Himalaya.

As Arnico Panday and Helena Molin Valdes argue on page 6, the emission of short-lived carbon pollutants like soot particles can be tackled locally, and addressing this would not just mitigate climate change, but also improve public health and make more efficient use of energy. This means regulating brick kilns, adding chimneys to household stoves, looking at crop burning practices and reducing forest fires.

The black carbon particles floating around in the Asian Brown Cloud in our region do not respect national boundaries. Prevailing winds from the Indo-Gangetic plains are blowing up pollution trapped in its inversion layer in winter to the mountains. The smog is getting worse as India's standard of living rises. The decision to make the Ganges navigable for seagoing barges to bring in imported coal for five new thermal power plants is just the latest indication of the way the region is headed.

We welcome international efforts to address transboundary efforts to mitigate long-term climate change, but what we need are much more urgent efforts closer to home to clean up the air.

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

BULLET AND BALLOT

'Nepal's Maoists have lost the electoral mandate in the present CA, but their contribution in stirring Nepal's socio-political transformation is undeniable' ('Bullet and/or ballot', Anurag Acharya, #745). What transformation is the writer talking about? There has been a lot of negative change, which I would agree with.

Poudyal

■ While I disagree with what and how PKD/Maoists went about their business, it is undeniable that they have changed Nepali society. The monarchy is no longer sacrosanct. People are learning to talk back to their superiors. There is a general sense of equality and republicanism which was unthinkable perhaps 20/25 years ago. I can list many other changes that I can see having returned after more than 15 years, but a sense of outspokenness is certainly discernible, which is great. While the blood-soaked revolution, the atrocities on innocents and even on their own sympathisers, the child soldiers are not defensible, but they did bring change.

N

DELAY THE FUSE

I am not sure the original Maoist agenda ever was 'class struggle' and by the same logic if it has become an 'identity struggle' ('Delaying the fuse', Editorial, #745), I believe it was, is and will always remain a political game. PKD knew that the monarchy was the



only barrier that stood between him and his ambitions. He had a plan. He acted upon it. And here we are 19 years later, almost to the date. I am sure if we compare newspaper headlines from Feb 1996 and Feb 2015, the same issues of water, electricity, jobs — dominate both ends of the time line.

Namah

START UPS

You really have a Catch 22 situation, don't you? ('Start-ups need staying power', Ashutosh Tiwari, #745) Investors don't like to put money into an unproven idea, but to prove an idea you need some investment. Starting a business should be easy and fun. Whether it will succeed is a different matter. People should not feel discouraged to start their own company simply due to the lack of know-how or government red tape. Investors know about the risks, but they also know that the initial capital required for a tech startup is much less compared

to traditional businesses. So it's all a tradeoff.

Jyaure

■ Having worked at various start-ups, re-start-ups, stop-downs, I can only add one comment: The product/service needs to stand out. It's not how we deliver it. Some may do it in Nepali, others in English while some in Bhojpuri — it doesn't matter.

N

MIRA RAI

The guilt of having been part of a party that killed some of her own brothers and sisters? ('Running all her life', Naresh Newar, #745) That surely is a thing to run away from.

Hurray

■ There is an interesting tid-bit half-buried in the story about Mira Rai: that she was a child recruit into the Maoist party and she was brought in as part of the Maoist effort to fool UNMIN and the government into thinking their army was bigger than it was. So, now we know it for a fact that the Maoists recruited child soldiers, and they deliberately tricked the gullible UN peacekeepers.

Jens

■ Wow. So someone did turn their life around. Great story, now where are the corporate sponsors?

Nam

■ So, this is why people sacrificed their lives? (Dahal lobbies for Yami's sister, eSpecial, 15 February 2015) So that BRB's daughter could get her PhD in a highly rated university of India,

Prakash Dahal could go honeymooning in Everest with his third wife, PKD's family could have jobs in PM's office, and BRB could finally make his 'sasurali' happy. Thank you Maoists for showing the world how truly stupid we are.

Sasha

■ There is still time for the 'Maoists' to re-think their tactics, re-unite and develop a coherent strategy for radical social and economic change based not on the reactionary notion of 'social inclusion' but on the basis of class struggle — maybe in opposition to a NCP-UML government ('The rise and fall of the Maoists', Om Astha Rai, 13 February 2015). The whole rhetoric of 'consensus' is profoundly misleading and anti-democratic.

David Seddon

MUST SEE

Woody Allen movies are light hearted romantic comedies, overflowing with simple dialogues and characters - and most importantly filled with easy to guess clichés around every corner ('Magic in the Moonlight', Sophia Pande, #745). We, the fans of his work watch it expecting those very elements. I'd say if you were expecting more in terms of stunning visual effects, action packed sequences and the cool/macho protagonist whose vocabulary and wardrobe are straight out of the hipster's dictionary, then sadly, this genre (consisting of Woody, Wes Anderson and very few others) is not for you.

Karma Tenzing Nyangmi

THIS WEEK



ANNA TENNE (46 LIKES)

- Most liked on Facebook**
"I'm having fun" by Sahina Shrestha
- Most shared on Facebook**
Nepalis are living longer by Santa Gaha Magar and Ramesh Kumar
- Most popular on Twitter**
Adventure Tourism: A billion dollar industry? (20 retweets, 13 favourites)
- Most visited online page**
Running all her life by Naresh Newar (697 views)
- Most commented**
Lengthening the fuse, Editorial

Timesnepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #746

Q. Rate the governance performance of the NC/UML coalition in the past year.

Total votes: 107

Excellent	6.54%
Good	29.91%
Terrible	63.55%

Weekly Internet Poll #747
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the Truth and Reconciliation Commission deliver justice for the conflict victims?

Plan A didn't work, Plan B is blocked Go for Plan C

These are the days of denunciation, not debate; confrontation, not reconciliation; and grandstanding, not sincerity of efforts to break the deadlock. Politicians in this country believe this is the only way to appear holier than thou.



THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshi

It would be unfair to tar all politicians with the same brush. But the UML's K P Oli and UCPN (M)'s Baburam Bhattarai take top honours when it comes to vitriol. The only difference is that while Oli mostly uses epigrams, innuendos and barbed Nepali proverbs, Bhattarai is crudeness and bluntness personified. Just visit his Twitter timeline @brb_laldhwoj to get a ringside view of his thought process. In this gloomy scenario there has been one positive development, though. On Tuesday, there was apparently a secret brainstorming involving younger leaders of the NC, UML and the UCPN (M) ostensibly without the knowledge of their party bosses.

The younger leaders came together to discuss ways to put pressure on their party heavyweights. Some of the youth leaders have a good public image and are known to exert some influence within their respective parties. However, they face big hurdles to get any possible agreement approved by their seniors. Some of that stems from a sense of insecurity among party bosses about the popularity of their own junior colleagues.

Let's hope the young turks get somewhere. The country cannot remain hostage to future election calculations of a handful of party bosses in each of the four political forces – two combos on either side of the battle-lines. Oh yes, it has now boiled down to this, as well as sharing of top state positions after the promulgation of the new constitution.

The NC-UML say they want to prevent a future ethnic conflict and disintegration of the state if we have single ethnicity-based states. The Maoist-Madhesi alliance claim their struggle is about ending age-old Nepali state discrimination and exclusivity. But these are all hollow stances, the real reasons are more petty and personal.

If the younger leaders fail, it would be the end of Plan A – that is, Constitution by consensus. There can be no two opinions that this is the best way to draft the constitution. But this insistence on consensus when the parties are unable to let go of their positions has now attained farcical proportions.

The Maoist-Madhesi alliance make it look like they are the righteous ones fighting evil forces (Bhattarai's reference to Mahabharat case in point) and want the "regressive" forces to accept their ideas on disputed subjects. That is consensus for them and their apologists. On the other hand, the NC and the UML see themselves as upholders of democratic norms and portray their current opponents as bad losers who are unable to come to accept the public mandate.

This confrontation has made Plan B – drafting the constitution through voting in the Constituent Assembly – close to unattainable as well. Some parties, including the UCPN (M) and Madhesi Janadthikar Forum (Loktantrik) had promised that in their election manifesto. Besides, all of the parties represented in the second CA agreed to adopt Plan B if consensus failed. That was on 21 March, 2014 when they passed the CA Rules of Procedure. This is uncomfortable truth to the progressive lobby but that's what it is.

This leaves us Plan C: going for a referendum. Which is not a new idea: it is mentioned in the Interim Constitution. But of course, the UCPN (M) will have none of it. They have a readymade answer against it, that it is against spirit of their "revolution" which they portray as if all ordinary Nepalis supported the mandate of the Jan Andolan II. It really baffles to witness the extent to which this party air brushes history.

If the parties failed to honour their self-imposed deadline of 22 January to promulgate the constitution, they risk squandering hard-earned gains, a scenario mentioned in this space previously. All four major forces would be responsible but the bigger blame would rest with the Maoist and Madhes-based parties. RPP-Nepal would be too happy to go for Plan C.

There's still time for the four major political forces. People are mighty ticked off and all the righteous indignation of the parties would come to a naught if they continue with their recklessness.

@damakant

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हिमाल

ग्राहक योजना

१ फागुनदेखि

हिमालको साथमा उपहार हातमा

५ रुपैयाँ भन्दा कमको लागि ५००० मा गिफ्टको रूपमा उपहार

२ रुपैयाँ भन्दा कमको लागि २००० मा गिफ्टको रूपमा उपहार

३ रुपैयाँ भन्दा कमको लागि १००० मा गिफ्टको रूपमा उपहार

हिमालमिडिया प्रा. लि.
काठमाडौं, ललितपुर, मोरङ, २०७२, २०७३, २०७४, २०७५, २०७६, २०७७, २०७८, २०७९, २०८०, २०८१, २०८२, २०८३, २०८४, २०८५, २०८६, २०८७, २०८८, २०८९, २०९०, २०९१, २०९२, २०९३, २०९४, २०९५, २०९६, २०९७, २०९८, २०९९, २१००, २१०१, २१०२, २१०३, २१०४, २१०५, २१०६, २१०७, २१०८, २१०९, २११०, २१११, २११२, २११३, २११४, २११५, २११६, २११७, २११८, २११९, २१२०, २१२१, २१२२, २१२३, २१२४, २१२५, २१२६, २१२७, २१२८, २१२९, २१३०, २१३१, २१३२, २१३३, २१३४, २१३५, २१३६, २१३७, २१३८, २१३९, २१४०, २१४१, २१४२, २१४३, २१४४, २१४५, २१४६, २१४७, २१४८, २१४९, २१५०, २१५१, २१५२, २१५३, २१५४, २१५५, २१५६, २१५७, २१५८, २१५९, २१६०, २१६१, २१६२, २१६३, २१६४, २१६५, २१६६, २१६७, २१६८, २१६९, २१७०, २१७१, २१७२, २१७३, २१७४, २१७५, २१७६, २१७७, २१७८, २१७९, २१८०, २१८१, २१८२, २१८३, २१८४, २१८५, २१८६, २१८७, २१८८, २१८९, २१९०, २१९१, २१९२, २१९३, २१९४, २१९५, २१९६, २१९७, २१९८, २१९९, २२००, २२०१, २२०२, २२०३, २२०४, २२०५, २२०६, २२०७, २२०८, २२०९, २२१०, २२११, २२१२, २२१३, २२१४, २२१५, २२१६, २२१७, २२१८, २२१९, २२२०, २२२१, २२२२, २२२३, २२२४, २२२५, २२२६, २२२७, २२२८, २२२९, २२३०, २२३१, २२३२, २२३३, 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Level up

Him Electronics, the authorised distributor of Samsung in Nepal has upgraded its Samsung Plaza at Surya Binayak. The international standard showroom will showcase all electronic products of Samsung including TVs, refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens and mobile phones.

Lineup

On the occasion of ICC Cricket World Cup 2015, Dish Home has added Star Sports HD and Star Sports HD2 in its channel lineup. Customers can enjoy the two channels without paying extra and they will be available permanently in HD packages.



Elevating systems

ThyssenKrupp Elevator, a leading global German elevator brand has extended its exclusive agency agreement with Infratech Nepal. The elevator brand is known for its precision and reliable engineering, product innovation and high-performance service standards.



New Toy

Him Electronics has revealed its highly anticipated mobile phone brand- ARK smartphones. The premium Nepali smartphone brand showcased its products under three main categories: Ark Edge in premium segment, Ark Icon in mid-range and Ark Storm in economic segment.

Colourful win

Asian paints has announced the 34 winners of Unlimited Elation scheme. Customers had the opportunity to win a silver coin on purchase of Asian paints, designer wall finishes of Royal Play colors as well as trips abroad and various other goodies.

Game on

Laxmi InterContinental Pvt. Ltd, the sole authorised distributor of Hyundai motors in Nepal has launched a prediction application for ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 in Facebook . Predictions can be made before all matches. Various goodies are up for grabs for the winners.



Heavy loaders

IME Automotives, the automobile trading subsidiary of IME Group has introduced Escorts Construction Equipments (ECEL) in Nepal. Consumers can now purchase wide range of construction and material handling equipments from the exclusive showroom in Gongabu.



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Getting rid of soot

Reducing black carbon in the region will have multiple benefits and save lives

HELENA MOLIN VALDES
and ARNICO PANDAY

The Himalaya region is among the most vulnerable to climate change. Retreating glaciers reduce dry-season water availability and increase the risk of glacial lake outburst floods, while increased climate variability and changes in rainfall and monsoon patterns could threaten regional water, food security and change the occurrence of landslides and floods.

Climate change in the Himalaya is partly a result of carbon dioxide, which can remain in the atmosphere and impact the climate for centuries. However, it is also caused by ‘short lived climate pollutants’ (SLCPs) that stay in the atmosphere briefly, but still impact on the climate. In recent decades the Himalayan region has experienced increasing urban and rural air pollution, affecting people’s health, agriculture, visibility and tourism. Globally, air pollutants have been shown to cause as many as seven million premature deaths every year, destroy millions of tons of crops, and push up the earth’s temperature, contributing to climate change.

The short atmospheric lifetime of SLCPs has two important consequences for policy makers: actions to reduce their emissions yield results much faster than actions to reduce CO₂ emissions, and they are most concentrated near their source regions. Because they also have significant impact on health and agriculture, action to reduce emissions bring significant non-climate benefits. Many of the biggest sources of SLCPs can be addressed using well-established measures that are cost-effective to implement.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) was set up three years ago to reduce these pollutants, it now has 100 members and is focused on finding practical solutions to reduce four key short-lived climate pollutants: black carbon, tropospheric ozone, methane, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

In the Himalayan region, action on just one of the SLCPs, black carbon (or ‘soot’) could have multiple benefits for health, food and water security and the environment. Household cook stoves are one of the main sources of black carbon in the Himalayan region. Typical cook stoves burn wood, dung and crop residues for domestic energy, and usually have very incomplete combustion, which pollute both outdoor and indoor air. Reducing exposure to black


carbon pollution from cook stoves could cut premature deaths in the region by as much as 750,000 people. Broaden the focus to diesel engines, brick production, and other pollution sources and the number goes even higher. The effect on agriculture could be just as dramatic: more than 15 million metric tons of staple crops could be added to the region’s food supply with the reduction of black carbon and methane.

The glaciers and permafrost of the Himalayan region store more freshwater than any region outside the Arctic and Antarctica: nearly 10% of the global total. Black carbon particles darken snow and ice surfaces, causing them to absorb more light and heat and melt faster. The melting of these huge stores of water and changing precipitation patterns threaten the water resources of up to 1.3 billion people living downstream with consequences for food security as the river basins fed by this water produces nearly a quarter of the world’s cereals.

A number of efforts are already underway in the Himalaya through CCAC. It has supported projects in Bangladesh to introduce low sulphur fuels, a national green freight program and a strategy to reduce black carbon emissions in Chittagong Port. The CAAC Bricks

Initiative is elevating the anti-pollution issue onto the agenda of national governments, and its Asian network is being coordinated by ICIMOD and will support Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan for cleaner brick production.

The International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI) is addressing SLCPs from agriculture assessing options to reduce open burning in the Eastern Himalaya as well as the Andes region in 2014-2015 -- regions particularly sensitive to black carbon emissions.

The CCAC is supporting the conduct of inventories of national consumption of alternatives to HFCs in 14 developing countries, among them Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Jordan, Maldives, Mongolia, and Vietnam. A technology demonstration project is being conducted on the capital island of the Maldives, and CCAC is working in India to demonstrate the commercial and technical viability of alternatives to HFCs in vehicle air-conditioning systems. 



Helena Molin Valdes is Head of the CCAC Secretariat and Arnico Panday is a Senior Atmospheric Scientist at the Atmosphere Initiative at ICIMOD. ccac_secretariat@unep.org

What are short-lived climate pollutants?

Black Carbon: a tiny black particle emitted during the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass, for example from brick kilns, open fires, diesel engines, and traditional cook stoves. They contaminate the air and darken snow and ice surfaces, making them less reflective which causes local warming and increases the melting rate of snow and ice. Black carbon is also a carcinogen.

Tropospheric Ozone: formed by sunlight-driven oxidation of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides. In the upper atmosphere ozone acts as a shield, protecting the earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation. But in the lower atmosphere, ozone warms the air and attacks lungs and leaves.

Methane: a powerful greenhouse gas with an atmospheric lifetime of approximately 12 years. Methane directly influences the climate system but also has indirect impact

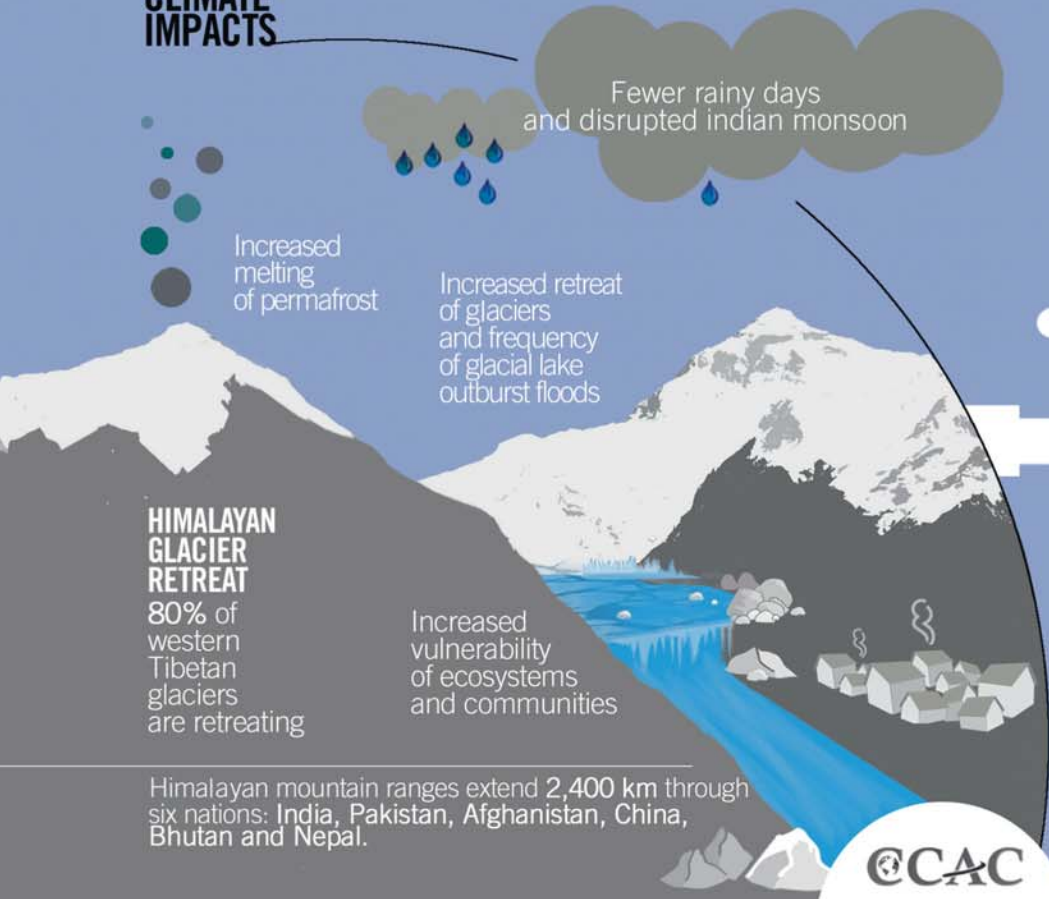
on human health and ecosystems through its contribution to the formation of tropospheric ozone.

Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs): powerful factory-made greenhouse gases used primarily in air conditioning and refrigeration. Although currently only a small fraction of the total greenhouse gases, HFCs are among the fastest-growing ones in many countries.

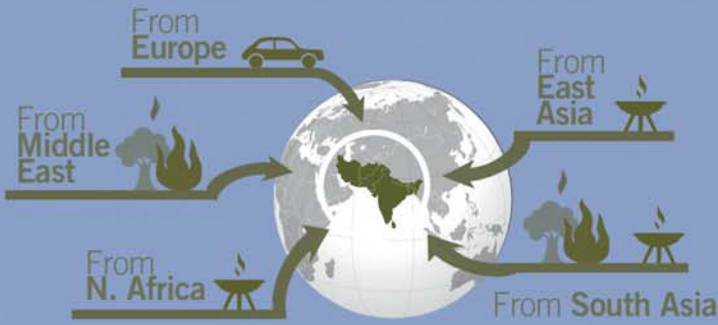
The Himalaya SLCPs in High Elevation Regions

SLCPs, especially BC and co-pollutants, are major contributors to the South Asian atmospheric brown cloud, with important consequences for monsoon rainfall and glacier retreat. Fast action on SLCPs could help slow the rate of warming over the Himalayan-Tibetan plateau, with multiple benefits for public health, food security and disaster risk reduction.

SLCP REGIONAL CLIMATE IMPACTS

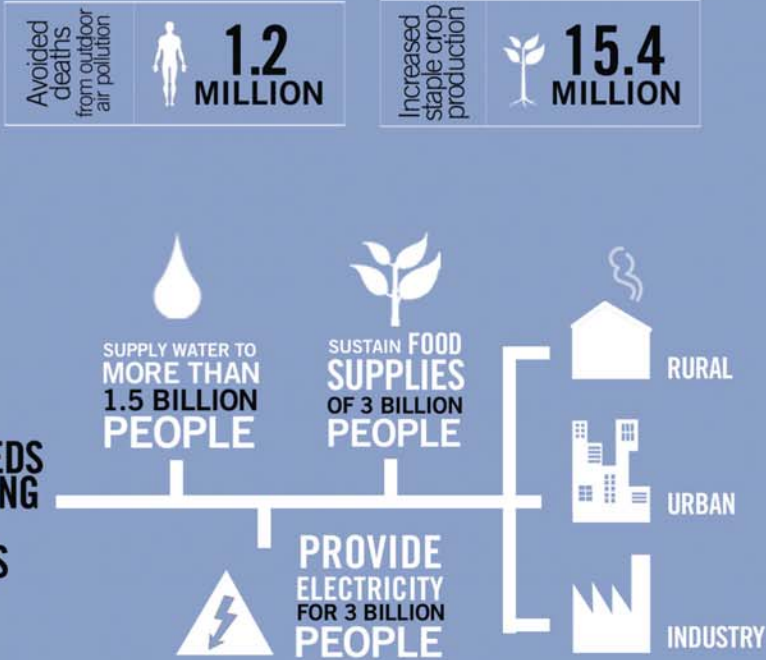


BC TRANSBOUNDARY TRANSPORT and main source sectors



BENEFITS FROM SLCP CONTROL MEASURES

In India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Bhutan and Nepal





EVENTS



Vive le cinéma,

Screening of three French movies subtitled in English for both children and adults.
21 February, 10.30am, Alliance française of Kathmandu, Tripureshwor, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com

Open House,

A fun-filled weekend with delicious food and heartwarming music in the company of inspiring social entrepreneurs.
21 February, 8am to 8pm, Pulchowk, 9843241490, patansquared@gmail.com

Buttons Up,

A showcase of organic designer buttons by Shailee Crafts.
21 February, 11am to 5pm, Cuppas Coffee, Putalisadak, 9803406589, info@shaileecrafts.com

Peace poets,

The second edition of South Asian Poetry Festival for Peace.
21 February, 1.30 pm, Bansantapur Darbar Square and 22 February, 1:30 pm, Patan Darbar Square, www.southasianpoetry.com

Photography grant,

Win Rs 100,000 grant to produce in-depth photographic work on social, political and climate change issues. Applications now open.
Deadline 28 February, photocircle.com.np, (01)5013501, mail@photocircle.com.np

Idea Fest,

Submit your ideas for community change and get funded to execute them.
21 February, 1 to 4pm, Chakupat, Patan, www.ideafestnepal.wordpress.com

Literature for children,

The first ever Children's Literature Festival in Nepal (See page 13)
21 and 22 February, 9am to 5pm, Rato Bangala School, Patan Dhoka, (01) 5534318, www.ratobangala.edu.np

Nippon cinema,

A two-day Japanese film fest organised by the Embassy of Japan in association with Japanese Language Teachers' Association of Nepal.
27 and 28 February, Tribhuvan Army Officer's Club, Tundikhel, (01)4426680, cultural-emb@km.mofa.go.jp

Video challenge,

A short video contest on the theme 'Gender Equality in Nepal' jointly organised by UNDP and UNFPA.
Deadline 1 March, (01)5523200, (01)5523880, kamal.sigdel@undp.org, schhetri@unfpa.org

Going digital,

A crash course on digital filmmaking.
1 to 6 March, Bikalpa Art Center, Pulchowk, (01)5013524, www.bikalpaartcenter.org

Video collective,

Artists Anil Subba and Ritesh Maharjan put on a collective performance.
7 March, 4pm, Gallery Mcube, Mitra Marg, (01)5260110, gallerymcube@gmail.com, www.gallerymcube.blogspot.com

Why volunteer,

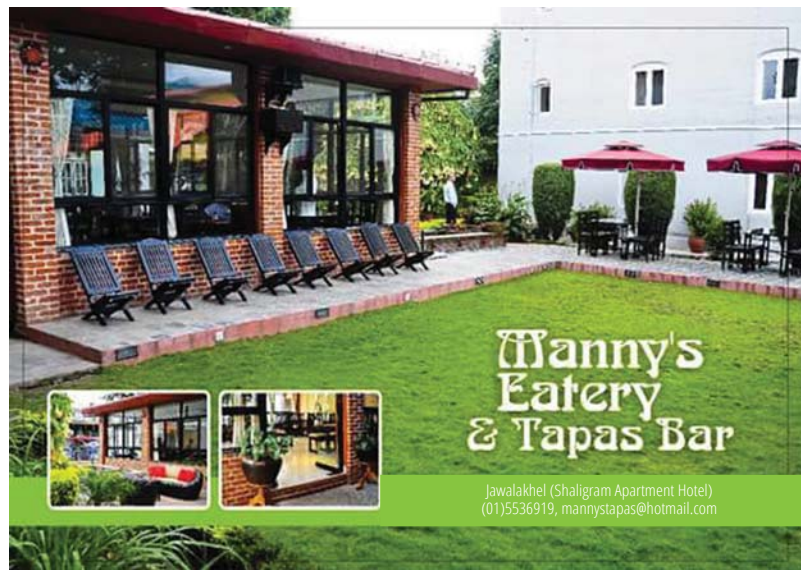
Shailendra Raj Giri of Mero Job talks about the benefits of volunteering.
7 March, 11am to 1pm, Café & Shop Mitini, Lajimpat, (01)4226471, www.cleanupnepal.org.np



The Laramie Project

Directors Deborah Merola and Dyvia Devt bring to stage this famous docudrama by Moisés Kaufman about the story of American Mathew Shepard who was beaten to death in 1998 because of his gay sexuality. The play raises important questions about prejudice, hate, exclusion and draws relevance of the incident to modern Nepal. Produced by One World Theater, the play stars celebrated Nepali theatre artists Rajkumar Pudasaini, Divya Dev, Shanti Giri and Sulakchyan Bharati.
Premiere show on 27 February, Rs 2000. Rs 500, 28 February to 15 March, Theatre Village, Lajimpat, 980-8041124, oneworldtheatreinnepal@gmail.com

DINING



Eco-café,

Opening of Leela's Eco Cafe, an undertaking of the Kevin Rohan Memorial Eco-Foundation. Live concerts by Rudra Band and Sakchhyam.
28 February, 3pm, Chalnakhel-5, Khahare, 985-043710, krishna@krmef.org, www.krmef.org



Vesper Cafe,

A quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps.
Jhamsikhel, (01)5548179, online@vespercafe.com

Black Pepper Café & Pub,

Cosmopolitan dining and drinking in a traditional style courtyard, try the apple sauce pork chops and enjoy the good service.
Kupondole Height, Lalitpur, (01)5521897, www.blackpepper.com

Manny's,

Try delicious coffee blends at Manny's coffee lounge.
Manny's eatery and tapas bar, Jawalakhel (01)5536919



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MUSIC



Bob Dylan night,

Prominent band of the late nineties, Flower Generation, pays tribute to musical icon, Bob Dylan.
25 February, 7.30pm, La Grange, Thamel, 9818258855

HANGOVER

Club Nights

Hangover night,

International and local DJs come together to create an unforgettable nightlife experience in the city.
20 February, 8pm onwards,
Moods studio and lounge, Thapathali, 9801037873, wjsevents@gmail.com

Black history,

Two bands celebrate the Black History Month. What the Funk! will be putting on a Funky performance this Friday.
Rs 300, 20 February, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com
Ashish Sinha plays Blues next Thursday.
Rs 300, 26 February, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com



Newaz live,

One of Kathmandu's oldest bands mixes blues, punk and grunge to rock the night.
20 February, 7.30pm, La Grange, Thamel, 9818258855



Album launch,

Nepali rock band, Monkey Temple launches its third self-titled album.
27 February, 7pm, La Grange, Thamel, 9818258855

GETAWAYS

Balthali Village Resort,

A cozy retreat with bird's eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses.
Balthali, Kavrepalanchok, (01)4108210, balthali@wlink.com.np, www.balthali.com

Neydo Monastery,

A monastery and guest house, Neydo is home to many significant religious sites of the great siddhas. Leave your troubles behind and book a room.
Pharpi, (01)6924606, info@neydohotel.com, www.neydohotel.com

Temple Tree Resort and Spa,

A peaceful place to unwind, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and sauna, it'll be hard to leave the premises once you enter.
Gaurighat, Lakeside, Pokhara (061)465819, info@templetreeneepal.com, www.templetreeneepal.com



Water Front Resort,

Birdwatching, paragliding, horse riding, mountain biking, boating: all that you can ask for at this eco friendly resort.
Sedi Height, Lakeside, (061)466370, www.waterfronthotelnepal.com

Atithi Resort,

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

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GOING HIMALAYAN IN S



New picture book lovingly documents the elegance and inherent beauty of Himalayan art, craft and architecture

STÉPHANE HUËT

Say the word 'Himalaya' and the first thing that comes to people's minds are treks and mountains vistas. But the region is much more than that, of course. The 3,000km mountain arc spans the crossroads of cultures, biodiversity realms, and is imbued with architectural and religious heritage. Kalidas called this vast and rugged mountain range 'the northern yardstick with which we measure the Earth'. No one book can do justice to such enormous diversity, but Thomas Kelly and Claire Burkert have decided to concentrate on the elegance, functionality, harmony and inherent beauty of Himalayan art, craft and architecture in their new book, *Himalayan Style*. Former Peace Corps volunteer and long-time Nepal resident, Kelly captures the





STYLE

grace and sophistication of artefacts from Ladakh to Bhutan, from Nepal to Tibet in 600 photographs. Burkert, who founded a project to promote Maithili art and craft, adds meticulously researched context to the pictures.

"This new project challenged me to discover and share the spirit of space, colour and inanimate objects," Kelly told us, ahead of the book's launch in Kathmandu this weekend.

Himalayan Style was conceived over seven years but it is a life's work for both Kelly and Burkert. "The idea of the book was inspired by my 30 year involvement with architecture and crafts in different parts of the Himalaya," says Burkert who founded the Janakpur Women's Development Centre.

When they started working on the book,

both already had loads of material, but Burkert and Kelly ventured out to collect missing bits. "Our trips were sometimes like treasure hunts," recalls Burkert. "The research for the book helped open my eyes to my environment so that I felt new to it."

Himalayan Style is obviously a labour of love for both the photographer and the author. Kathmandu looms large because Burkert and Kelly are both based here, but also because of the sheer wealth of arts, crafts, architecture and festivals in the Valley. Much of this is threatened by modernisation and urban sprawl, so the book lovingly documents what is left.

Take the recently-restored Sundari Chok inside the Patan Darbar Square, for instance, the intricate stone carvings of deities of the royal bath are a national treasure. But *Himalayan Style* goes beyond just the physical to the meta-physical – by explaining the significance of festivals and religious processions of the Valley's living culture.

Burkert and Kelly look at the Hindu-Buddhist heritage of the Himalaya from the distinct standpoint of style. We are reminded that if prayer flags have become part of the natural landscape or decorative elements, they represent faith, compassion and goodwill.

Himalayan styles have evolved over the centuries, and the book features the work of craftsmen like carpet designer Pasang Tsering who reinvented the Tibetan rug tradition. In the foreword, Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman writes about 'architecture of the enlightened' in the Himalaya, which is represented by the environment-friendly concept of the Druk White Lotus School in Ladakh.

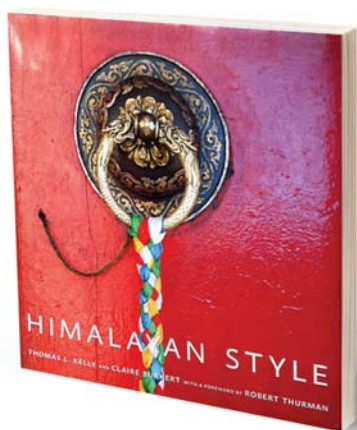
Sadly, Himalayan styles are being eroded by mass-produced items, the uniformity of modern consumerism, and the spread of a global monoculture. "The traditional craft of the Himalaya is being lost," says Kelly. "But hopefully *Himalayan Style* will inspire a respect for traditional practices."

Kelly's photographs and Burkert's text are a tribute to the artisans preserving the traditional skills and practices. Take stone carver Jaya Raj Bajracharya, painter Raju Shakya or lost-wax bronze master, Rajan Shakya. There are also people like Christopher Giercke who has revived the art of weaving cashmere into designer shawls exported to Hermès.

Himalayan Style also highlights the contemporary designs in the Kathmandu Valley. The 'moveable house' of Leslie Shackelford and Götz Hagemüller's Kuthu Math in Bhaktapur are striking examples of how traditional skills of Asia can meet modern aspirations and comforts. Babar Mahal Revisited, Garden of Dreams and Patan Museum are examples of exquisite restorations in Kathmandu.

Burkert says she has collected a lot more material and not everything fit in the book. So, are there plans to bring out another one?

She says coyly: "It's too soon to talk about it, but we still stay with style." 📺



Himalayan Style

by Thomas L. Kelly and Claire Burkert
Roli Books, 2015
304 pages

PICS: THOMAS KELLY

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SUNTALI

It has been a long time since I saw a Nepali film that didn't jar me right out of the reverie that a well-made film is supposed to keep you in. I am speaking of perfect sound mixes, smooth cinematography with uniform lighting, harmonious



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

shot compositions, believable dialogue, spot on editing, and a musical score that complements the visuals rather than overwhelms them. *Suntali* has all of these sophistications, which believe me, for a first time feature length director, is not a small achievement.

Director Bhaskar Dhungana's black comedy is, therefore, a real pleasure to watch with moments of true hilarity even while the social commentary remains sharp and true to village life in Nepal. The story is simple enough, though close examination of the script written by Prawin Adhikari shows careful attention to detail and a real understanding of the minutiae of both village life and knowledge of the colloquialisms we use when speaking to each other. Most Nepali films in the past have fallen prey to the use of awkward formalities in their dialogues that weigh down their typically melodramatic plots.

Suntali starts with a long but very charming introduction, voiced by Madan Krishna Shrestha, that details the quirky characters of the village set high up in the hills on a ridge (filmed in the real life Newari town of Bandipur). The village is ruled by a formidable matriarch, Chinmaya Subedarni (Suryamala Khanal) and her rather unfortunate son Sundar (Karma) with an iron fist. When

she arranges an engagement ceremony for Sundar with the toothy daughter of a well-to-do bureaucrat she expects all to go well, an expectation that is dashed to bits with the entrance of Suntali (Priyanka Karki) - a cheeky, pretty, young woman who arrives in the middle of the auspicious proceedings with a seedy husband, aptly named Bajrang (Pramod Bajrahari), in tow.

Suntali flips her hair in slow motion as she arrives dressed in her hot pants with her coiffed hair, calls Chinmaya "auntie", and dares to try and feed her some mithai from a box she bears flirtatiously in front of her very attractive torso. This is pretty much when all hell breaks loose in the village, with all the men swooning over Suntali as she manipulates them to do her bidding.

Deep, dark, very ugly secrets are revealed. People's inner most desires get exposed in wittily conceived flashbacks (I won't spoil these for you by describing them), and most of the jokes elicit belly laughs, though some do fall short partly because they are oft repeated.

Aside from the slow pace and the relatively clever person's ability to guess at the plot fairly easily, *Suntali* is quite the pleasure for those of us who have cringed in the theaters while watching Nepali films in the past. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com
■ Trailer 🗣️



HAPPENINGS



ARMY DAY: President Ram Baran Yadav, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and CA Chair Subhas Nembang with Army Chief Gaurav Shumsher Rana at the Army Day celebrations in Tundikhel on Tuesday.



FAIR CHECK: Chairman of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Democratic Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar attends a Tharu Cultural Fair at Tharu Village Hotel and Restaurant in the capital on Friday.



MONKEY GOD: A Hindu devotee dresses up as Hanuman, the monkey god, at the Pashupatinath Temple on Tuesday during the Maha Shivaratri Festival on Tuesday.



WAR ACT: Netra Bikram Chand's faction of CPN (Maoist) celebrated the 19th anniversary of the start of the war at Rastriya Nach Ghar on Friday.

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



Bal Sahitya Mahotsav, Nepal's first children's literature festival 21-22 February promises to be a milestone in encouraging Nepali writers and publishers get school students into the habit of reading. The festival is organised by Rato Bangala School's publishing wing with support from UNICEF Nepal and World Education.

Adheep Pokhrel, program and outreach coordinator at Rato Bangala, says the idea of the festival is to bring together teachers, writers, students and publishers to make children's books more entertaining and instructive.

During the two-day fest at Rato Bangala School in Patan, visitors will get an opportunity to interact with several Nepali authors including Tikaram Sharma Paudel and Gyannistha Gyawali. Singer Amrit Gurung, actor Rajesh Hamal, and author Narayan Wagle will also participate in read aloud sessions.

"We also hope to provide an opportunity for families to appreciate the power of reading," Pokhrel told us.

Open activities involving both parents and children will be held along with slam workshops, poetry writing and vocabulary games. "These interactive workshops aim to stimulate their critical thinking," says Pokhrel.


Kanak Mani Dixit, whose book, *Adventures of a Nepali Frog*, which has been translated in 14 languages will launch his new children's book, *Every Which Way Up*

Everest, at the festival. Indian author, Aneel Bisht will also be launching his book, *Flying Kisses* at the event.

Department of Education staff from Mugu, Kalikot, Achham and Bajura are also attending the Bal Sahitya Mahotsav. About 400 children from government schools of the Kathmandu Valley have also been invited.

"We hope that they will get ideas to

organise such events in their respective schools in the Western districts of Nepal after taking part in the festival," says Pokhrel.

Marilyn Hoar, of UNICEF Nepal, says the event underlines reading as a vital component of education. "This first edition is a test," she says, "we plan similar events in other parts of Nepal."  Stéphane Huët



PICS: KENJI KWOK



**OPEN FROM
8AM
TO
10PM**

Lovers of pub food and sports fans listen up - Five Crowns (FC) Sports Bar is the place to be during this Cricket World Cup. Illuminated by neon red and blue lights, the 500-seater pub has the ability to rile up a roaring atmosphere during any big game.

Be sure to order a side of Korean Wings to go with your beer of choice. Marinated in a "special FC sauce" that was reminiscent of a sweet barbeque dip, the chicken wings are a perfect compliment to any bitter malty beer.

Six drumsticks go for Rs 250 but I'd recommend you order the 12 pieces variety (Rs 500) straightaway, as the chicken pieces were small.

Those who prefer a spicier dish can opt for the Spicy Ginger Wings. The pub also serves a variety of other snacks like Honey Pork Chilly (Rs 300).

F.C. Sports Bar

The mains, however, were not this sports bar's strong suit. The Grilled Chicken with Mushroom sauce (Rs 400) was overcooked and was served with very little mushroom sauce. In addition, two small pieces of chicken could barely justify the price.

The Grilled Fish with Wine

Garlic sauce (Rs 400) was a slightly better dish. The fish was grilled till crisp on the edges, and was cooked evenly throughout — something often overlooked when preparing fish dishes. However, the red wine and garlic sauce were a tad pungent and failed to compliment either fish.

Both the mains were served on a bed of chunky mashed potatoes. Personally, I prefer soft chunks of potatoes because they add texture to the dish.

Diners who love cheese will enjoy the Baked Fish with Cheese (Rs 400) and Macaroni with Bechamel Sauce (Rs 400).

FC Sports Bar also has a coffee shop in front of the bar where they serve lattes, milkshakes and juices. Detached from the loud cheers and hip music of the pub, one can

relax with a cappuccino (Rs 150) and a delicious cheesecake (Rs 140). The balcony seats above the coffee house overlooking the quaint streets of Jhamsikhel are the best seats.

The best part about FC Sports Bar is that customers can order from the main menu even while seated in the coffee house, allowing diners the best of both worlds — you could sit on the balcony, enjoy a cup of coffee and order up some pub grub without the roars of men cheering, or you could join in on the fun at the sports pub with a drink or two.  Cynthia Choo

How to get there: FC Sports bar is in Jhamsikhel, right beside Cafe Soma.



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Temporary paralysis

Ram Bahadur, 50, was washing his face when he suddenly felt the left side of his face go stiff and numb. He could not close his left eye either. When he looked in the mirror, Ram saw that the left side of his face



DHANVANTARI
Buddha Basnyat, MD

was drooping. Anxious that he was having a stroke, he called his wife who comforted him saying that it was not a stroke as he could move all his limbs and talk to her with ease.

Ram Bahadur was diagnosed with Bell's palsy. The doctor noted that Ram's eyebrows remained

asymmetrical even when he tried to raise them as there were no creases on the left side of his forehead. Although he could not close his left eye his vision was intact. The problem was strictly limited to his face.

Ram started on a tapering course of corticosteroids but went on to try several other alternative treatment modalities. After two months of medication, Ram recovered fully, but the crease on his forehead remained.

Bell's palsy is a common temporary paralysis brought on by the inflammation of the seventh cranial nerve (there are 12 pairs of cranial nerves which originate from either hemisphere of the brain) that activates the many facial muscles in our face. It was first described by Scottish physician and theologian, Charles Bell, in the nineteenth century.



Bell's palsy is not a serious ailment even though the condition often frightens people into thinking that they are having a stroke.

What causes Bell's palsy remains

unknown and hence there is no specific course of treatment. In Nepal we often see the condition among high altitude trekkers. Whether high altitude and the cold help bring on this palsy is hard to tell because the problem is quite common even at sea level. But one theory posits that as the brain of every person going to high altitude swells to a certain extent, the brain swelling may cause the seventh cranial nerve to compromise its function as it courses through the narrow crevices in the brain before it exists to activate the muscles of the face. Many are also unaware that Bell's palsy affects one in 65 people at some point in their lives.

Most people who suffer from Bell's palsy recover within three weeks, even without any treatment. Some 15 per cent

require three to six months for recovery. Treatment with steroids may hasten this recovery period. The major complications that arise due to this palsy are ageusia (a chronic loss of taste), synkinesis which is brought about by the regrowth of the seventh cranial nerve in a faulty and confused manner (for example, when the person closes the eye, the same side of the mouth may also lift involuntarily) and eye infection (when the affected eye is not taped shut at night as the eye may not close voluntarily for the first couple of weeks).

The take-home message is that in most instances- Bell's palsy is a common but benign neurological illness. The one thing it may compromise is your smile. If you suffer from Bell's palsy, you just have to tell your friends that your smile will return soon. 🍷

GIZMO by YANTRICK

MOBILE DARKROOM

Mobile photography is no longer restricted by low camera resolution and poor image quality like in the past. Even digital cameras are now equipped with Wi-Fi capabilities, allowing you to transfer high quality photos directly to your mobile phone so you can instantly upload them onto various social media platforms. All you need now is a powerful photo editing tool for you to work on your photos on the go, and this is where the Darkroom – Photo Editor by Bergen comes in the frame.

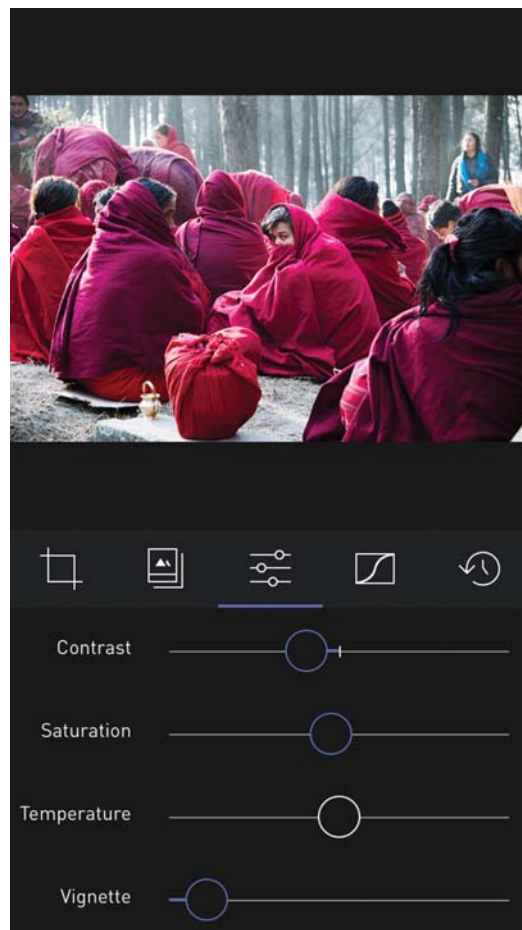
The iOS app, which is now available for free in the App Store, packs a punch of features tailored for all photography enthusiasts. Having learnt from the mistakes of its competitors, Darkroom skips past the need to import your photos into the app, allowing you to edit your photos straight from the camera roll.

Designed with a beautiful black interface that matches the simplicity of the iPhone operating systems, Darkroom also works surprisingly fast

throughout its user interface – perhaps even faster than the VSCO Cam by Visual Supply Co, which scored big with many professional photographers. Even though the application only comes with basic image filters, what gives Darkroom an edge over other similar apps is its option to create customised filters.

The sliders for settings such as brightness, contrast and even vignette are simple to use and straightforward without too many technical terms to wrestle with, which certainly makes post-processing super simple. You can do even more advanced tweaking by adjusting the RGB Curves but this comes at a cost as the feature remains an in-app purchase (Rs 300). Still, this app will certainly appeal to photographers who have been waiting for the Adobe experience, without having to pay the subscription costs for Lightroom Mobile.

Instead of having to reset all the edits when you make a wrong adjustment, the app



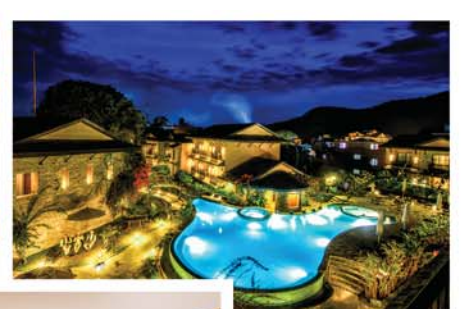
is integrated with an infinite history function that allows you to view the list of steps that you have made and return back to any stage along your workflow. Once done, simply swipe down and hit share, which reveals another neat feature: Save photos in Instagram's square format.

You no longer require a separate app like Whitagram to fit your photos into a 1:1 format — Check the 'Save as Square Photo' feature and it will be automatically transferred over to Instagram to share it with your followers. Darkroom is not yet available on the Google Play Store, so Android users will have to stick with Snapseed for now. 🍷

YANTRICK'S VERDICT: Developed for photography enthusiasts to have better control over their photos, the newly launched Darkroom comes with features that have long been missing in other photo-editing apps, making it an all-in-one tool that will now find a permanent home in our phones.



Darkroom – Photo Editor by Bergen is available for FREE in the Apple App Store.



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Learning from experience

Teachers look beyond textbooks into their communities for sources of knowledge and curriculum ideas

BETH NORFORD
in MAKWANPUR

Pedestrians crossing the Rapti river came across a group of women sketching images of the fauna and flora they could see. Later the same group of women waded into the water under the bridge, looking at the plants and animals found in the river.

This was neither a scientific expedition nor a new breed of eco-tourists. It was a group of teacher trainees, learning first-hand about the natural resources in that community setting and how the resources were being utilised.

For two weeks teachers at Kamane Bilingual Academy, in the outskirts of Hetauda, took part in a 'experiential learning' training organised by the school's new principal, Pratibha Dangol. This new approach focuses on using first hand experience in real life settings rather than just learning and memorising from textbooks.

Upon return the teachers recreated their experience by making collages illustrating what they observed at the river and its surroundings. The pictures were captioned and bound into a book that became a part of the trainee classroom library.



BETH NORFORD

The teachers created a bar graph recording the uses of water in their community. As a group, the trainees also built a complex model of the river and the bridge using newspaper, papier maché, paint, wire and a variety of other materials.

It required complex problem-solving skills (how does one create a suspension bridge from

recycled wire and cardboard?), cooperation as a group, detailed recollection of the experience, and discussion of what had been observed (what was the colour of the river after monsoon?) to learn and work in that manner.

Learning directly from the source is called the 'integrated curriculum' approach. Out-of-class learning experience makes

the subject matter more authentic and it is a better way to have more insight into 'real' life. This method of learning requires team work, and allows everyone to think outside the box rather than the writings in a textbook.

Having travelled around Nepal for over 20 years as an education consultant, I admire the country's education system

but there is still much room for improvement. The national curriculum is based on sound research on child development and curriculum design, but the problem with Nepal's education system is the stress and pressure of standardised exams, such as the SLCs, that students and teachers experience. There is no time for experiential education, which leads to only studying from the books to meet the high expectations of good grades for parents and school officials.

Nepali students deserve better than just memorising from books. They need to get out in their communities, and learn about the country's environment and their surroundings. The students need to have knowledge of their community and their country. They need to learn more and have access to well-maintained libraries. They need to know more than the subjects taught at school. Students would benefit from classes such as art, painting, woodwork and ceramics to name a few.

Integrated and experience-based learning is not just an effective way of teaching and learning, this form of learning is also essential to ingrain knowledge in students so our future leaders have the ability to develop the country into a more progressive Nepal. 🇳🇵






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BACK TO THE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN

Young Nepalis are taking two years off to teach in rural schools and upgrade the quality of education

CYNTHIA CHOO
in SINDHUPALCHOK

Mani Nakarmi, 16, often misses classes because she has to help her mother with household chores while her brother, Sudip, prepares for his SLC exams in a private boarding school in Kathmandu.

Mani is an eighth grader at the government-run Nawalpur Secondary School 70 km northeast of Kathmandu, but wishes to study in a private school just like her brother.

"Maybe then, I can be as smart as him," she says.

Nepal has taken dramatic strides in improving literacy from 50 per cent in 1990 to 88 per cent today. Net enrolment in primary school has gone up to 95 per cent, and it is 75 per cent in lower secondary schools.

However, because education in public schools is seen as lacking in quality, parents tend to send boys to private schools in the city and keep girls in village government schools if they have a choice. This has sparked efforts in recent years by private and non-profit ventures to improve the quality of government schools.

Teach for Nepal is one such initiative that has tried an innovative approach to improve the quality of education in public schools through a two-year fellowship program (*see box, overleaf*) in which young Nepali men and women teach in village schools.

"The fellows are well-trained graduates. They are taught to improve the quality of lessons and also influence the schools to adopt better teaching methods or school practices when needed,"

says Shishir Khanal of Teach for Nepal.

However, what worries Khanal is that male teachers still outnumber the female ones in schools. Only 14 per cent of teachers in secondary government schools are women. This is why Teach for Nepal encourages more women to apply for the fellowship, and, last year sent 23 female teachers to public schools in Lalitpur and Sindhupalchok.

"A lot of students have never been outside their village," says Khanal. "Female teachers can be a role model for girls in those classrooms."

Babita Kushwaha is a Teach for Nepal fellow who has been an English instructor at Nawalpur, where Mani Nakarmi goes to school. Babita is also helping two of her brightest students apply for scholarships in colleges abroad.

Despite her best efforts, Babita admits it is difficult to change the mindsets of public school teachers who are not eager to address the inefficiencies of the government education system.

When Babita returned to Nawalpur after taking students to Kathmandu for Teach for Nepal's Big Brother Big Sister program last week, she was shocked to find that the school had been closed because the Teach for Nepal fellows were away.

"It is not just the students, even the teachers don't show up if they have an excuse," she says.

In 2014, only 28 per cent of students from public schools in Nepal passed the SLC exams compared to 93 per cent in private schools. But since



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ALL PICS: CYNTHIA CHOO

Teach for Nepal started sending teachers to Nawalpur Secondary, parents have started taking their children out of private schools and enrolling them in government ones.

Bishownath Sapkota, for instance, decided to move his son, Kabiraj, back to Nawalpur Secondary. "I heard Teach for Nepal was sending some new and good teachers, so I transferred my son back," he said.

Khanal says Kabiraj's transfer is an example of how "parents are seeking quality education regardless of public or private schools".

Since the Teach for Nepal fellows Babita Kushwaha and Bikash Deshar arrived in Nawalpur Secondary School, they have set up a reading corner and science experiment labs for students, persuaded the school to conduct daily assembly to monitor the punctuality of students, and also set up Teach

for Friends, a peer tutoring session in which students help other students who are lagging behind.

"It was difficult trying to persuade the school to buy basic material, but now students can conduct simple experiments," says Bikash. The Teach for Nepal model seems to be benefitting high-need public schools in Nepal by recruiting graduates skilled in English, Maths and Science.

"These are three compulsory subjects that most students fail in, recruiting graduates who are skilled in those areas will be beneficial for students in public schools," explains Khanal.

Teach for Nepal fellowships last a minimum of two years.

Khanal says this is necessary because changes will not happen overnight and need sustained effort. He is determined to send new batches of teachers for as long as possible. 🇳🇵



Babita Miss

Babita Kushwaha (above left) moved to Kathmandu when she was ten from her home district of Rautahat in the plains to study in a private school against her family's wishes. Supported by her brother, Babita completed her undergraduate degree in Kathmandu University and is now a Teach for Nepal fellow.

Since last year Babita has been teaching English at Nawalpur Secondary School to students of Grades 6-10. The 24-year-old says she was inspired to join Teach for Nepal after seeing the positive changes they were bringing to public schools.

"If I had caved in to family disapproval of me getting an education, I would not be doing what I'm doing now," says Babita who turned down a well-paying job offer at an INGO to join the fellowship program. "I felt it was my turn to give back to society," she adds.

With help from friends, Babita also worked to set up a

small reading corner at the school. Her youthful energy and dedication has made her a favourite among students, many of whom aspire to be like her.

"I want to pass my exams because of Babita Miss and go to Kathmandu to become a nurse," says Sumita Tamang, a tenth grader.

Although Babita had a tough time adjusting to life in a village initially, it is her students who keep her motivated she says.

"Whenever I step into a classroom and the students come running up to me, I no longer feel frustrated or sick, and I feel like giving my best," she says.

Her co-teaching fellow, Bikash Deshar agrees. "It is tough to live with bare minimum when you are used to the comforts of the city but the children make it worth it."



Teaching for Nepal

Inspired by Teach for America, Teach for Nepal was started in 2012 by social activist Shishir Khanal. It started as an initiative to work towards improving the quality of education in public schools and ending education inequality in Nepal through a two-year fellowship program, in which university graduates are trained to teach in high-need public schools.

In a similar six-week long training program as Teach for America, university graduates are selected as fellows and trained

to become transformative teachers in public schools.

In the last two years, Teach for Nepal has sent 52 fellows to government schools in Lalitpur and Sindhupalchok districts. Last week, it inducted its latest batch of 60 fellows who will also be placed in Dhanusa district.

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Making war on the day of love

MOHAN MAINALI

It is a strange coincidence that the Maoists launched their so-called ‘people’s war’ exactly 19 years ago on Valentine’s Day. This is the day dedicated to love, yet in Nepal it reminds us of the brutality of war.

At just past midnight on 14 February 1996, the Maoists simultaneously attacked police stations, rural banks and even a Pepsi Cola factory across the country in Rolpa, Rukum, Gorkha, Sindhuli and Kathmandu.

The Maoists had given a two-week ultimatum to the government to meet their list of 40 demands, but they did not have the patience to wait for a response and launched their violent attacks choosing the auspicious day of love. The war lasted a little over 10 years, by the end of it more than 13,500 Nepalis had been killed by fellow-Nepalis. More than 1,500 were taken away from their families and are still missing. More than 800 had their bones crushed.

This wasn’t a brief outburst of violence perpetrated by misguided people, it was premeditated and pre-planned. The attacker layed waiting to slash, thrash, pound their victims. They were proud that they had been indoctrinated to carry out these acts. The legacy of that violence is still with us. We see it in some news reports and occasionally on the Facebook statuses of victims.

One such post last year on Facebook was by Maoist guerrilla Yadav Devkota who lost his close comrade, Aita Bahadur of Dhading who was in the Maoist Fourth Division, and was disqualified by UNMIN. His father and sister had been killed during the war, and his mother committed suicide by jumping into the Trisuli. All collateral damage of a war fought in the name of the people.

While reporting the war and the post-conflict period, my experience has been that there are a lot of people who still suffer from post-traumatic stress and carry on with their everyday lives carrying the



MOHAN MAINALI

“How can one human being kill another?”

burden of their memories. Those who started the war thought they could end it. But for those who suffered from the violence, the war never ended.

The families of the missing suffer their bereavement every day. In Bardiya, where the most number of people went missing, I once came across a march by families of victims. Among them was Jagat Kumari Basnet, whose son Keshar Bahadur, who used to run a nursing home in Bhuri Gaun, was detained by the army in 2002 and never seen again.

When the march reached the main crossroad, the victims’ families were allowed to speak. Jagat Kumari got up, and despite her age, mustered the energy to climb up on stage. “I went kicking and screaming to the barrack to ask for my son, they told me he would be returned in a few weeks, but he never came back. I

am wounded inside,” she said, “I will probably never find his body, I just wish I could perform his last rites.”

A few weeks later, I was at another end of the country in Dhankuta where I ran into Sahabir BK. As soon as he found out that I was a journalist, he took out a

small photograph from his wallet in the back pocket. “My youngest son,” he said simply, “I cannot forget him. I always have his picture with me.”

Sahabir’s son, Santosh, was only 14 when he was taken away by the Maoists in July 2002. Thirteen days later, the radio announced that Santosh had been killed. Sahabir never got his son’s body, he never found out why he was killed. When we visited him, Sahabir was doing his blacksmith work at the charcoal fire, forging sickles and axes. Later his granddaughter accompanied



Sahabir when he went to the field with his plough.

As we left, Sahabir took out the picture of his son once more from his wallet, and said: “I wonder how big he would be now, what he would be doing?”

The violence of war feeds on the brutality that lurks within the human psyche. It suppresses reason and compassion. People can be cruel to each other at other times, too, but it usually manifests itself briefly and is gone. The rest of the time, people are generally compassionate and peace-loving. However, during war, inhumanity is unleashed, cruelty stays and persists. During most wars, people find it hard to believe that human beings are capable of such inhuman cruelty.

Sankh Bahadur Gurung’s two sons were killed in Kalikot in 2002. Sankh Bahadur (pic above) received the news, but he did not believe it. His contractor told him to take his son’s salary and funeral expenses. He didn’t believe his son

was dead, and he still doesn’t. I asked him why he doesn’t accept the fact that his son is dead. His answer: “How can one human being kill another?” Sankh Bahadur still had not understood that this is what people do in wars: they kill each other.

In far-western Nepal’s Bajura district, at least one person had understood the reality of war. “It is a time when people have to be afraid of people,” he explained to me. But what of people who are trained to wage war and kill?

Maoist Brigade Commander Suresh Pahadi has written this in a book about his guerrilla training: ‘There was a sign on the stage that read *Down With Indian Expansionism*. Suddenly an anger rose within me against the Nepali state and its king Gyanendra for selling out the motherland. I wished to see the day when he would be beheaded.’

Soon after this book came out, Suresh’s supreme commander told a Maoist conference in Hetauda that India was not expansionist after all. Suresh and his comrades gave the red salute and agreed with it. Nothing had changed in Nepal’s relations with India, but the former guerrillas had been brainwashed to forget their wartime indoctrination.

The effects of war leave a scar on society for generations. Prithvi Narayan Shah’s cruel punishment of the people of Kirtipur is still remembered 250 years later. An average Nepali has at least 10 close relatives, which means the war has affected hundreds of thousands of people directly. They are not going to forget.

One cannot get away by simply saying that war brutalises society. When discrimination, inequality, and injustice prevail there will inevitably be violent conflict. That is why it is important not to forget a war that was started 19 years ago on a day dedicated to love. 🇳🇵

nepalitimes.com
■ Watch video of documentary by Mohan Mainali

Going gaga over Yeshi

Sajana Baral in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-22 March

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In the YouTube video ‘Sir & Student’ that got over 350,000 views, we can see Yeshi Dolma Lama playing various characters—from a teacher with a fake moustache to a studious teacher’s pet and a journalist among others. In 2011, when Lama aka Yeshigaga on YouTube uploaded her first video, she could not imagine that her channel would have over 22,000 subscribers.



“I know a lot of people watch my videos, but I don’t know who they are or even why they watch them,” says Lama. Her own mother had a hard time believing that Lama was on YouTube.

Daughter of famous comedian Dolma Hyolmo, she credits her mother as her inspiration. “She was so funny on screen. In the past I laughed watching my mother on screen, today she laughs watching me,” says Lama.

At one point Lama lost her drive to be an actor due to the stress her mother had as a comedian. But that did not last long, as Lama’s aspirations came back after watching videos of YouTube celebrity Nigahiga, an American YouTube actor of Japanese descent with two billion views for his videos.

“I wanted to do something with my friends but most of them were too shy. So I ventured out on my own,” says Lama whose channel includes beauty tutorials, fashion tutorials, and vlogs but it is her parody videos like ‘Kya Bejjat’ (How embarrassing) and ‘Dad ko rajniti’ (Dad’s politics) that have made her one of the better known Nepali YouTube celebrities.

Lama said it is not an easy job to put oneself out there and not gain a few ‘haters’ in addition to the faithful fans. Another difficult issue is making Nepali videos in Germany, where Lama is based, because she cannot easily find what she needs. Once Lama needed a dhaka topi and had to order it online from Nepal.

This multitasking individual is a quadruple threat: as she not only acts in and edits her videos but also writes the scripts, and is a popular blogger.

Lama says her heart lies in making videos that make people laugh, she is aware that they are a form of escapism for many Nepali migrant workers toiling around the world.



HOOK: CIAA

सेतोपाटी

Rajes KC in *Setopati*, 16 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Celebrating Democracy Day will be significant if we move the country towards peace, stability and prosperity by implementing all agreements that I had with political parties.”

Ex-King Gyanendra Shah in *onlinekhabar.com*, 18 February

TRC and Col Lama

Truth and reconciliation, but not without justice

At long last the long-promised Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been established and a Chair appointed. There has been much debate regarding its remit and the extent to which it will offer a degree of impunity to those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.



THE GADFLY
David Seddon

Chair Surya Kiran Gurung has suggested that the TRC Act should be amended to give the Commission full jurisdiction over cases: meaning it should not have to seek permission from the courts for access to documents and investigate cases sub judice.

The UCPN(M) has supported this claim, arguing that all conflict-era cases should be handled by the TRC and not by the courts. Various legal authorities have suggested that this might not be possible since the supremacy of the Court must be maintained.

This issue may take some time to resolve as it is not simply a matter of legal jurisdiction, but is also highly political. “We need to prepare the code of conduct and

legal framework,” Gurung said, “we also need to build the physical infrastructure.” It is not at all clear why any physical building is required, but perhaps he means developing the necessary capacity to undertake investigations.

He has promised that all “stakeholders” would be consulted and that institutional development and practice of the TRC would be transparent. He indicated there would be funds to assist victims requiring support to lodge their complaints and make statements, and also that those who wished to remain anonymous would be able to do so.

He underlined that the TRC would not force “reconciliation” on victims of conflict and would not ignore the component of justice. This last clause is crucial, for the notion of transitional justice is an important ingredient in the truth and reconciliation process if it is to be effective. “There cannot be amnesty for serious cases of human rights violations,” he has stated clearly and publicly.

However, Gurung added: “We should be mindful that the peace process does not get derailed because of our acts.” This means that the TRC will not pursue a witch-hunt but will attempt to balance the potentially contradictory demands of justice for crimes and human rights abuses perpetrated in the past, on the one hand, and the need to move forward into the future, on the other.



While this process moves forwards in Nepal, the trial of Colonel Kumar Lama (*above*)- who was arrested in the UK, in January 2013, under Section 134 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which defines torture as a ‘universal jurisdiction’ crime, and who is currently being prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service - continues later this month with further hearings. Col Lama is charged with ‘intentionally inflicting severe pain or suffering’ on two Nepali citizens - Janak Bahadur Raut and Karam Hussain - in two separate incidents that allegedly occurred between April and May 2005 at the Goringhela Army Barracks in Nepal.

The case initially went to the

Criminal Court, which decided that Colonel Lama should be prosecuted for allegedly torturing two detainees at the Goringhela Army Barracks in 2005, during the Maoist insurgency. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) called the decision a victory for justice and issued a report ‘Authority without Accountability: The Struggle for Justice in Nepal’ pointing out that none of the major political parties had made any tangible commitment to address accountability for human rights abuses perpetrated during the conflict. The case eventually went to trial in May 2014, despite intensive lobbying by the government of Nepal as well as by Nepali political parties (including the Maoists) to drop the charges against Colonel Lama. The proceedings were delayed, and the trial effectively postponed until 2015.

The government of Nepal, under Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had previously agreed to bear the cost of Colonel Lama’s defence, and released Euros 220,000 to this purpose, but it was later argued that it was ‘difficult’ for the government to afford his defence and that Colonel Lama should receive legal aid. More significantly, there were suggestions that the matter might be resolved out of court through ‘negotiations’ with the British government. Meetings were even held at the beginning of January 2015 between Foreign Secretary Arjun Bahadur Thapa and Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Simon Fraser who heads the British Diplomatic Service. Thapa apparently requested Fraser to ‘help settle the case amicably’ in view of the special relationship between the UK and Nepal.

Despite this intensive lobbying on the part of the government of Nepal, however, the trial is to resume later this month.



Conflict victims fear the TRC serves only the interests of a state made up of former enemies.



BHASWOR OJHA/KANTIPUR

Who doesn't want a TRC?

OM ASTHA RAI

After the formation of a panel last month in the Constituent Assembly to hold a vote on the contents of the new constitution, relations between ruling and opposition leaders have soured so much that they were not even on talking terms. Throughout the first two weeks of February, they kept publicly blaming and abusing each other.

Despite such bitter discord, the government did something that united both sides: form two transitional justice mechanisms. Acting on the recommendations made by a former Chief Justice-headed committee, the cabinet formed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and a Commission to Investigate Enforced Disappearances (CIED). And neither side objected. Their silence implied endorsement.

For conflict victims awaiting justice, the formation of the TRC and CIED were unanticipated. They

did not think that the government would form transitional justice mechanisms at a time when a writ petition that challenged some provisions of the TRC act was *sub judice*. The Supreme Court is due to deliver its verdict on the writ petition jointly filed by 234 individual conflict victims on 26 February. Conflict victims say any TRC or CIED would be unacceptable to them unless the act is amended.

“We have no faith in these commissions,” says Devi Sunar, mother of 15-year-old Maina Sunar who was detained, tortured and killed by soldiers on 5 February 2005 in Panchkhal barrack of Kavre district. “It’s just a ploy to give impunity to perpetrators of serious war crimes.”

Devi is one of the relatives of victims who challenged the TRC act in the Supreme Court. “I cannot understand why the government didn’t wait for the court verdict,” she says. Conflict victims say they are against the act mainly because it allows for

amnesty to perpetrators of human rights violations, and does not consider enforced disappearances as a criminal offence. “Unless this act is amended, I will not go to any commission for justice,” Sunar told *Nepali Times*.

The TRC Chair Surya Kiran Gurung (*being sworn in on 11 February by the Chief Justice, above*) is trying to assuage fears of conflict victims, saying his commission would not recommend reconciliation in grave human rights violations against international rules and standards. Prakash Wosti, commissioner of the National Human Rights Council (NHRC), says the TRC should be given the benefit of doubt as it has promised to not give impunity to perpetrators of human rights violations.

But, Gurung’s assurance has not placated war victims, who are now gearing up for a protest against formation of the TRC and CIED. Instead, even the NHRC, which was involved in recommending names for the TRC and CIED

members, has come under fire from human rights activists for abandoning the cause of war victims. Human rights activist Charan Prasain says, “If the NHRC is committed to justice for war victims, it must not support the TRC.”

The state’s apathy towards the amendment of the controversial act is not the only reason survivors are up in arms. Apparently acting at behest of political parties, the recommendation committee did not propose independent experts as TRC and CIED members. Instead, it put out names of only those who are close to political parties. One of the TRC members, Shree Krishna Subedi, had even pleaded at the Supreme Court on behalf of UCPN (M) leader Agni Prasad Sapkota, who was accused of kidnapping and murdering Arjun Lama of Kavre district during the Maoist insurgency.

The Maoist insurgency resulted in the killings of 17,000 people and enforced disappearances of many more thousands. Families of more

than 1,000 people disappeared during the conflict still do not know where their lost relatives are. The war is over but their pain is not.

They want closure and justice. This does not just mean throwing every offender behind bars or monetary compensation from the state. What victims really want is a genuine apology from those who killed their family members and relatives.

They want to know what happened to relatives who disappeared. It’s as simple as that. But by hastily forming transitional justice mechanisms and appointing only those close to political parties as TRC and CIED members, the state seems to have ignored voices of conflict victims.

After the formation of the commissions, a question has arisen: who are these commissions meant to serve if conflict victims have disowned both? They fear the commissions serve only the interests of a state made up of former enemies.



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Madam Chair, Respected Sofas, Indistinguishable Dignitaries, Esteemed Desks, Honorific Ministers, Your Excellence the Donors, Male Members of Media Organs, you Venerable Self-appointed Guardians of this Country's Morals, Ordinary Fellows, and last and also the least the latecomer gentleman at the back who is distracting everyone. Yes, I mean you, near the door in the golf cap.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with great pride and prejudice that I take the opportunity to address this Six-Day Interaction Programme on 'Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development of Grassroot Constituencies Through Gender Mainstreaming, Capacity Building and Empowerment using a Local Multi-Stakeholder Bottoms-Up Approach and a Paradigm Shift in Their Agenda-Setting Role in the Context of Economic Globalisation and Elite Capture' organised by GONe in corporation with FEDUP, UNDO, USURP, DEFEAT, HERPES, INSECT, DANDA and FINITO. So, now that the esteemed cameraperson from Nepal Television has finally arrived, we can get on with the formality of declaring open this talkathon by asking the Chief Guest Comrade Awesome Possum to please beat around the bush for as long as it is humanely possible.

"Thank you. Nepal's democracy has come of age, and one vivid proof is that geriatric revolutionaries like me can give obsolete speeches like these and you don't really have to listen. Which means I can go on and say the most outrageous things because you have all tuned out by now here in the audience and in living rooms across the country, where many of you have already used that greatest

of democratic tools, the remote control, to flick it to Diya Aur Baati Hum.

As you all know, I live in a parallel universe which is why I am now declaring the establishment of a parallel government with myself as prime minister, president and home minister. See, that didn't even cause a flutter. Goes to show that you all don't really care.

In 2010, I was removed by wireless. Today, Jhusil Da would not have the cojones to push for a vote on the constitution if he wasn't listening to instructions from AIR. And I have decided to go back to war because no one has told me via Akashvani otherwise. And what's the big fuss about nominating Lahr Kyal Kamred to the CA, we are just doing what the knagresis and eh-maleys did before us: making asses of ourselves. OK, OK, we also couldn't say no to the five corrodes.

It is when a revolutionary party graduates from a two-line struggle to a five-line struggle that you know it is entering the political mainstream and Nepal's democracy has come of age. It is our deliberate strategy to speak in tongues and send out confusing signals through five different splinter groups of our vainglorious party. It is because of my respect of pluralism and my tolerance of dissenting voices that we now have nearly half-a-dozen parties in this country that swear by the Great Helmsman Mao Tse Tung. It gives me great pride to say that Nepal has the highest per capita Maoism and Stalinism in the world.

The other sign that a country's democracy has graduated from adolescence to full-blown senility is that our citizens won't take 'no' for an answer anymore. When I tell them to come out on the streets on 28 February, they will. And it's a good thing this is a Great Leap Forward Year, otherwise there wouldn't be a February 28. Haha, clever, huh?

In our mature democracy, we don't need to prove anything to anyone anymore. Gone are the days when we performed archaic rituals like forming militant unions, bashing up media bosses, and carrying out abductions and inductions. We don't extort anyone anymore, we just wire in three-and-half arabs from the Virgin Islands.

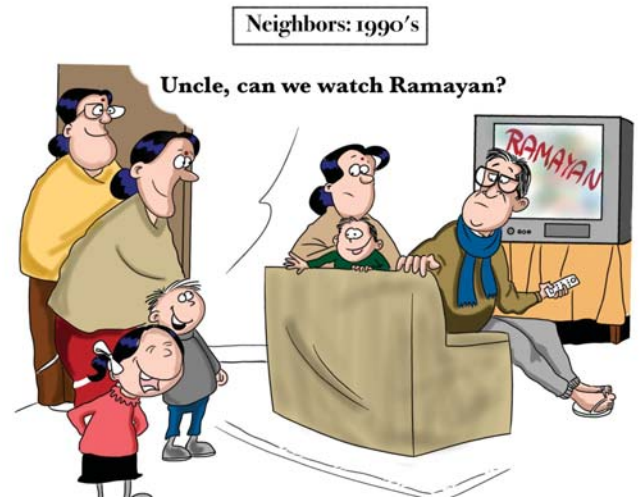
With that, I would like to end my two words so that I can get back home to watch myself on the evening news. You, in the golf cap, wake up."



The Ass

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