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SARA LEVINE

PEAK BLOOM

Rhododendron trees were in full bloom along the Annapurna trekking trail earlier this week on Poon Hill, as hikers from all over the world came to admire the mountains in the peak bloom.

Another lost decade

The post-conflict transition has now lasted nearly as long as the conflict itself.

EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Forgive, or forget?

Qianyi Qin compares the post-Mao era in China to Nepal's own post-conflict record on transitional justice.

PAGE 15

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ANOTHER LOST DECADE

This April will mark the ninth anniversary of the People's Movement that forced King Gyanendra to step aside, restore parliament and bring the Maoist guerrillas down from the mountains into an interim government. How many different ways can we say the same thing? The duration of the post-conflict transition has now lasted nearly as long as the war itself.

No one expected the peace process to be easy. The country was going from monarchy to republic, from war to peace. The inequality, injustice, discrimination and exclusion that were some of the precursors to the insurgency needed to be recognised and resolved through a new, genuinely democratic constitution.

To be sure, some significant achievements were made. Camps housing the Maoists were dismantled, and the guerrillas disarmed and demobilised. Some opted for golden handshakes, others were inducted into the national army. And despite the human and economic cost of the war, it did significantly make hitherto marginalised Nepalis aware of their rights. It forced the ruling class to grudgingly admit that it had for too long monopolised decision-making, neglecting or ignoring other castes and classes, regions and religions. Never before in Nepal's history, through the Rana years to the Panchayat period, is the collective Nepali consciousness as alert to rights and justice as it is now.

But this has dragged on for too long. Many of us remember the elation of the ceasefire and restoration of democracy in April 2006. The sense of relief and optimism was palpable, finally we had a chance to reap the peace dividend, catch up with the lost decade of development, and address some of the underlying social issues.

That sense of cautious hope was reflected in an editorial in this newspaper titled 'Freedom at midnight' which we carried in this space in our 27 April 2006 issue #295.

Here is an urgent checklist: reciprocate the Maoist ceasefire to create the atmosphere for a peace process



The duration of the post-conflict transition has now lasted nearly as long as the war itself.

to start, bring the army effectively under parliamentary control, halt all major purchases of military hardware and helicopters and use freed up funds to kickstart service delivery of health and education to all corners of the

country. Before the euphoria evaporates, people need to see immediate proof that democracy this time will mean an improvement in their lives.

Alas, it hasn't quite worked out that way. The effort to complete the peace process by passing a new constitution and giving the country's economic development new balance and momentum is faltering. Some of the earlier goals of the revolution for a more inclusive democracy through 'ethnic liberation' have turned out to be empty slogans. It's plain old vote-bank politics masquerading as ethnic and regional autonomy.

Most Nepalis have seen through this, and have the common sense to know that mixing politics with religion and ethnicity can be explosive. They just want state services that work, and they want jobs.

But there are still some in the international community who hold on to the misconception that this is really a struggle for inclusion, identity and autonomy. Nothing could be further from the truth, and we can't wake up someone who is pretending to sleep. However, both our big neighbours seem to be perfectly aware of the prospect of Nepal becoming unstable and affecting their national interest if we go down the current formula of federalism in the new constitution.

Chairman Dahal got that message loud and clear from the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy. To the South, there is a belated realisation that the handlers and bureaucrats who decided they knew best what was good for the Nepali people and foisted a fatally-flawed federal formula on us were playing with fire. The only question is how to backtrack without losing face, taking identity politics away from hotheads who have built their identity on ethnic politics, while ensuring that whatever comes now is not regressive.

Let us not try to correct past injustices by making an even bigger blunder. And let's not wait till the tenth anniversary of the ceasefire to take this country forward.

YOUR SAY

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JUST JUSTICE

Let's not forget who started the conflict first ("Just justice", Editorial, #751). The Maoist atrocities destroyed families, villages and the nation. Even after they joined mainstream politics they continued in their path of violence and crime. The national security agencies had to do something to counter the Maoist actions. To put blame only on the security forces that were protecting the citizens is wrong.

Bairagi Khukuri

■ Means do not justify the ends. Undoubtedly there was/ is widespread discrimination, and disconnect between the Palace (subsequently Singha Durbar) and the common wo/man on the street. But, if the security forces tortured, detained without charge, and murdered, they must be held accountable.

Namah

■ Col. Lama of the Nepal Army has already been arrested and charged. Now, it's time to take action against one of the major Maoist leaders for there to be any kind of parity. Why not put Prachanda on trial, as he was the supreme commander of the PLA during the so called people's war. A clear message needs to be sent - shooting your way into power is not acceptable.

Dev S

■ Nations with servile attitudes only do what they're told to do by their boss ('Elusive truth and justice', David Seddon, #751). This menial behaviour isn't new, comes from decades of chattel slavery that Nepali diplomats were practising to attract donations back in the country and all that in the name of poor people.

Nirmal

AN AILING NATION

Unless we change the senior leaders in every party and replace them with young blood, nothing is going to change ('An ailing nation', Anurag Acharya, #751). Nepal needs leaders with visions and ability to forge consensus to reach a common goal. Outdated, arrogant and senile leaders, with their only credibility being the number of years associated with their parties, simply do not have the mental aptitude to lead the country.

BK

■ The era of criminal politics must end. Nepalis must fight back against the oppression of the leaders. People came together to remove the horrible tyranny of Rana rulers and united once again to remove the Shah Kings. Now the time has come to work together to oust the corrupted and criminal rule of the Bahuns that dominate the political landscape of today.

Prajwol Thapa Magar

THE NEPALI PAST

Great read, at an appropriate time, as we are seeing this "Newar Renaissance" around us, which is recognised by both Newars and non-Newars ("Creating the Nepali past", Kanak Mani Dixit, #751).

Krishna S

ACID ATTACK

A generation of Tharu families were exploited by their elite Tharu and Newar, Bahun, Chettri landlords ('I am happy I tormented my tormentors', Guna Raj Luitel, #751). If there is mass assault revenge, is that justified? What about the victims raped by the security forces during the conflict period or the murdered police by the Maoists? Should we also justify violent retaliation? There are Dalit families who feel psychologically threatened and discriminated, does that justify their physical attacks against their perpetrators? Your story is so bent on saving this atrocious man rather than condemning his violence. It's not the cause but the ultimate action that is the concern. Can you be so irresponsible as to glamourise a vicious crime?

Janu

■ Many dreams burned along with Sangita's face. Hope this kind of incidents won't be repeated.

Kiran Adhikari

■ 'Lines between victim and perpetrator have got blurred' - Oh really? So if he had raped her to teach her a lesson that would be debatable as well? Hmm, now I see where the backward, 'deeply ingrained' bullshi" is coming from - our very own intellectuals!

N

PRIVILEGED FREEDOM

I reside in the UK and even here our Nepali culture restricts the female ("Privileged freedom", Anajana Rajbhandary, #751). There is an expectation to have a good career and at the same time build a traditional home/family life. At 27, my parents are worried (luckily I am not) about my single status.

Anita Gurung

■ As a 32-year-old unmarried man, I have been subjected to countless conversations among my relatives. Everybody asks me when I will get married. If an unmarried man can be subject to social pressure, I can only imagine what a woman has to go through.

Byakuya

ASS

Interesting. Are we naturally glum or is it the longstanding socio-political-economic mess weighing us down ('Glad to be sad', Ass, #751)?

@GuyAirline

Times

THIS WEEK



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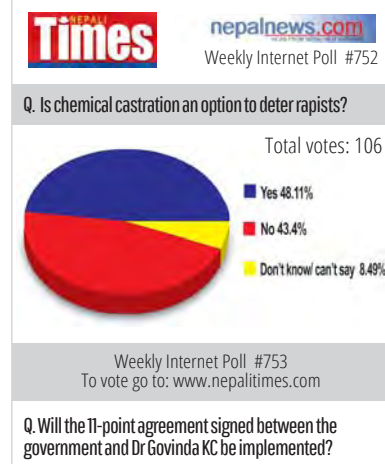
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If you can't silence them, label them

There is growing intolerance to dissent and different views

On 31 March, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) published a report about the arrest of three Malaysian journalists on charges of 'sedition'. Labelling someone anti-national or charging someone with treason or sodomy is a ruse rulers use to stifle dissent and sideline rivals.



THE DEADLINE
Damakant Jayshi

Malaysia has kept opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in legal limbo on charges of sodomy. In the Maldives, ex-president Mohamed Nasheed is in jail on trumped up charges. A Singaporean teenager is in hot water over a YouTube video criticising Lee Kuan Yew.

All this is nothing compared to Bangladesh where a second blogger has been butchered in the last two months on the streets for Internet postings.

Growing religious intolerance and fundamentalism in South Asia is a worry and politicians happy with short-term gain are actually investing in long-term catastrophe which could engulf them as well. Clearly, the governments in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are displaying an ostrich-like attitude over attacks on free speech and religious minorities.

The turmoil inside the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of India is partly caused by an intolerant streak displayed by its charismatic leader, Arvind Kejriwal. There may hardly be anyone who would deny that Kejriwal's image was a significant factor in its stunning election victory in the Delhi assembly elections in February, but he labelled Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav who questioned him as "traitors".

The script is more or less same everywhere. If you refuse to engage with a differing viewpoint, you either remain silent or resort to extreme action or reaction. Trying to silence one's critics then becomes an obsession.

In Nepal we have a good example of I-know-all-so-I-should-not-be-challenged in Baburam Bhattarai and his chums, among them some journalists who frequently hurl the term 'idiot' against those who

challenge their worldview. These are the same sycophants who launched a vicious name-calling campaign against those who opposed their view on federalism after the collapse of the first Constituent Assembly in 2012.

Rajendra Pandey, a Constituent Assembly member from the UML was so livid with Govinda KC's hunger strike against granting affiliation to, among others, Manmohan Medical College (he and many of his party colleagues are promoters) that he called the respected surgeon a "lunatic".

Pandey's remarks were indecent and uncouth, but instead of reining in Pandey the UML put pressure on Prime Minister Sushil Koirala to disregard his own commitment to KC back when the doctor was on a hunger strike last year.

But the surgeon's supporters, not just doctors and medical students but also editors, reporters and human rights activists, do not want to acknowledge at least two eventualities. The first is that halting services at the OPD and other sections at hospitals are going to hit the patients and their family, the very people on whose behalf KC has launched a crusade. Protesting inside hospitals and attending to the sick in Tundikhel is a farce.

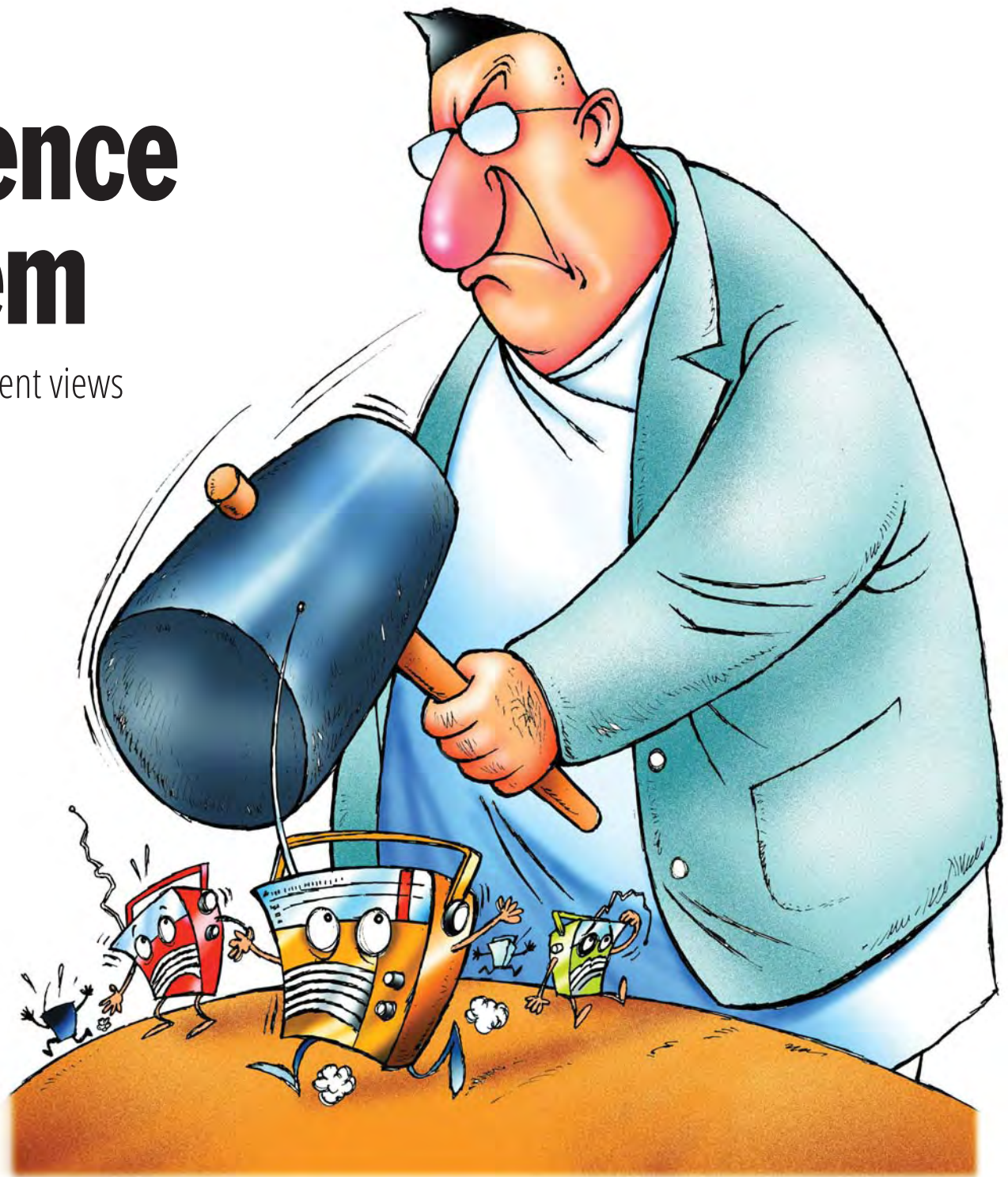
During KC's third and fourth hunger strike last year, many doctors who work in government hospitals abandoned their duties to express solidarity with the fasting surgeon but continued with their work at private hospitals and clinics. But raise this question, and you are showered with abuse.

In 1995, Khushwant Singh was pilloried by Indian communists and the Congress for questioning the literary merit of Rabindranath Tagore. Singh

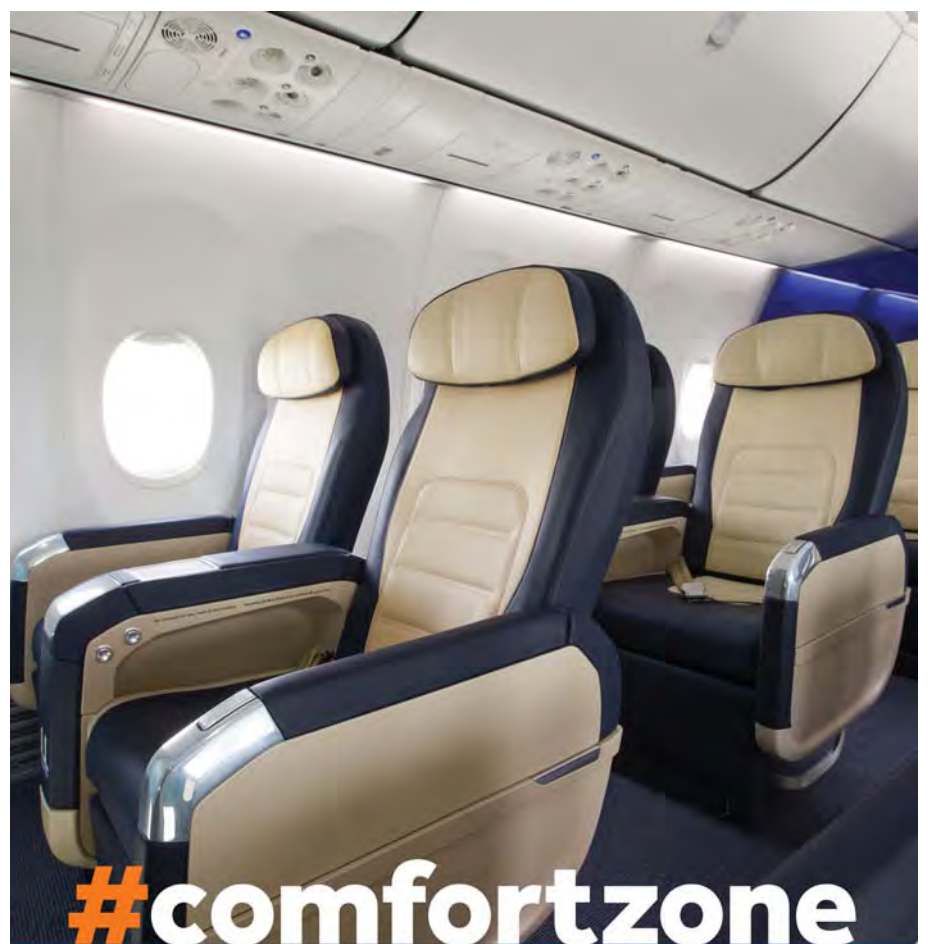
refused to apologise, prompting the West Bengal political parties to pass a resolution against him in the state assembly. The Sardar, not to be outdone, had also said that Bengalis have three holy cows: Tagore, Satyajit Ray and Subhas Chandra Bose.

We have our holy cows here, too, and they are secularism, republicanism and federalism. Question this so-called 'progressive' agenda and you are sure to be pushed to a wall and pummelled in cyberspace. It's time we grew up.

@damakant



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It's governance, stupid

PRADUMNA B RANA
and **CHIA-YI LEE**

Developing countries have much to learn from Singapore's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew who transformed the republic from a third world economy to one of the most advanced countries in one generation.

The lessons for countries aspiring to learn from the Singapore development model are clear: strengthen institutions and improve governance. But this is much easier said than done. Aspiring countries need to improve the rule of law and reduce corruption. The civil service, bureaucracy, and public administration need to be reformed, and private sector allowed to flourish through regulatory reforms and clearly-defined property rights.

The dilemma is that such reforms generate benefits only in the long term, making them hard for policymakers and politicians with a shorter time horizon to set as priorities. Yet, without them, other policy measures to support sustained economic growth will become less effective and ultimately unravel.

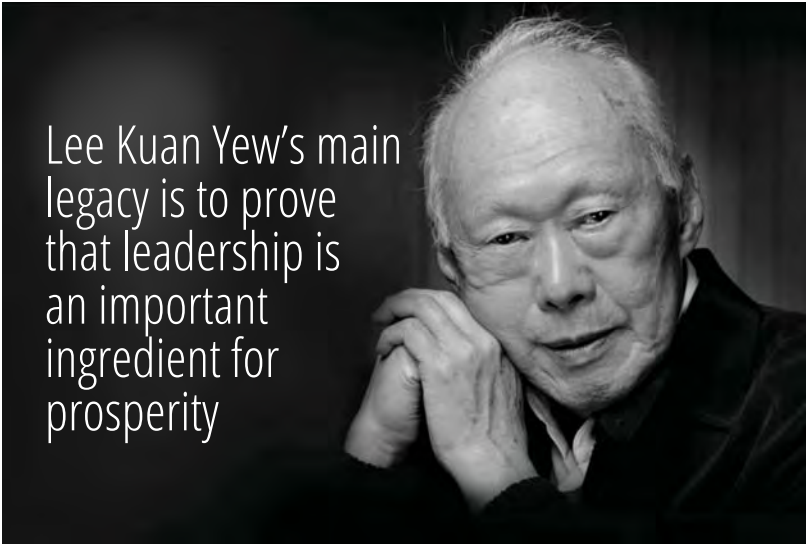
Development theorists used to think that economic development could be explained solely by factors like the availability of natural resources, high levels of saving and investment, and

openness to foreign trade and investment. More recently, the Commission on Growth and Development headed by Nobel laureate Michael Spence has used the Singapore model to cite an additional factor: good governance.

As Singapore's Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong puts it, to make a delicious dish "besides having the right ingredients and the right recipe, you must have a master chef".

Economic development does not just happen. It must be consciously chosen as an overarching goal by rulers -- a government that delivers political and economic stability, implements the correct macroeconomic policies, articulates a vision for the country and implements it. This requires a capable, committed, and credible government that people can trust, and leaders with integrity. An abundance of natural resources is neither necessary nor sufficient for a country's economic development.

After the separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore was similar to a typical Third World country of today with GNP per capita of \$300, high unemployment rates, and rife racial disharmony. As the Prime Minister of a small country, Lee was always thinking big and making bold decisions in the interest of the country. Lee adopted a development model



based on export of labour-intensive manufactured goods to world markets. He invited multinational companies to invest, telling them: "Produce in Singapore and sell to the world."

To attract investors, Singapore built infrastructure, cut tariffs and quotas, offered tax incentives, and implemented appropriate macroeconomic policies. The Economic Development Board was established in 1961 to provide a business friendly environment. The National Wage Council was also set up in 1970 to make sure that the benefits of foreign investment were shared and also to accelerate Singapore's move up the development ladder.

Lee met foreign investors regularly and listened to them and their grievances. Although pragmatic, his

choice of an export-oriented development model driven mainly by foreign investment was a risky strategy at the time. Dependency theorists had argued that foreign investors typically exploit cheap labour and extract natural resources of the developing countries. It is only after the success of the Singapore development model that export-oriented development strategies driven by foreign investment has been popularly adopted all over the world.

By the 1990s, Singapore had moved from labour-intensive manufacturing towards high-tech and knowledge-based industries. Lee noted that since jobs had been created his priority was to improve the quality of the new investments and with it the education and skill levels of

Singaporean workers.

Lee's attempt to make Singapore the Asian financial centre and global business hub is also bold. Unable to compete with Hong Kong, Lee convinced foreign banks to come to Singapore by establishing integrity, efficiency, the rule of law, reliability, and stability. "The history of our financial centre is the story of how we built up credibility as a place of integrity, and developed the officers with the knowledge and skills to regulate and supervise the banks, security houses and other financial institutions," Lee said.

However, other developing countries, primarily in South Asia, will face difficulties in adopting this strategy. They began economic reforms in the 1990s by focusing on macroeconomic areas which had contributed to rapid economic growth. But the reforms ran out of steam because of red tape, endemic corruption, and lack of rule of law.

They could learn from the Singapore model, because as Lee Kuan Yew liked to say: "It's not how you begin the journey, it's how you end it." ■

Pradumna B Rana is associate professor and Chia-yi Lee assistant professor at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. www.rsis.edu.sg



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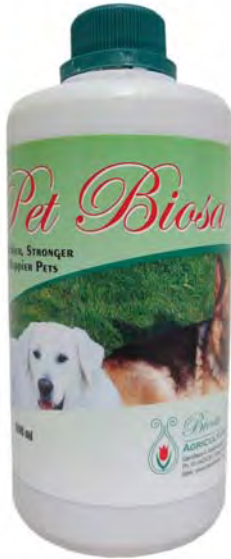


Dogs go organic

AYESHA SHAKYA

From organic farming to consuming natural, untainted produce, humans are increasingly inclining towards following an organic lifestyle. Now, man’s best friend also wants in.

A Nepali firm has collaborated with a Danish pet food company to produce canine dietary supplements. Biosa Denmark and Biosa Nepal teamed up to produce Pet Biosa -- a probiotic supplement made up of beneficial microorganisms, organic acids and 19 different herb extracts to protect the pet’s gastrointestinal tract, aid in digestion and



boost immunity in dogs.

“Although Pet Biosa is relatively new in the local market, there is a big push for pro-biotic supplements. With the help of these good bacteria, the dog’s immune system is reverted to its natural state,” says Abiral Pant of Biosa Nepal.

Pet Biosa contains a much higher concentration of probiotic ingredients than similar products in the mass market.

Following positive results from several trial procedures carried out by Nepal Agriculture Research Council, Agriculture and Forestry University and Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science, the product entered the market in January

2015. It is being sold in over 30 retail outlets in Kathmandu and is being used by Mount Everest Kennel Club and Royal Kennel Club.

“Using Pet Biosa improved the digestion of our kennel dogs and helped improve their appetite. Furthermore, their coats became thicker and shinier. Since it is a natural product, there are no side-effects and can be used synergistically with other medicines or antibiotics if needed,” says Pratik Man Pradhan, a vet at the Mount Everest Kennel Club.

To track the benefits, Pradhan tested out Pet Biosa on a selective group of dogs. Within a week, improvements were seen in the group using the product: their immunity improved and respiratory problems also lessened.

The positive effects were noticed by Him KC of Royal Kennel Club who first tested the product on his own dog. Within a few days, the Cocker Spaniel had a better appetite, became more active and some of her bald spots on her coat started filling in.

Established in 2002 by Erik Nielsen, Biosa Denmark has branched out to 25 countries across Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia. It was formally set up in Nepal in 2011 through support of the Danish Embassy.

Pant says Pet Biosa is a local product backed by European technology. It wants to expand to Bangladesh and tap the vast Indian pet food market next door. 🇳🇵

prabhu BANK

BIZ BRIEFS



Furious 7

Etihad Airways and Universal Pictures have unveiled the luxury Fast & Furious 777 airliner at Los Angeles International Airport. The newly decalred airliner will fly direct route between Abu Dhabi and Los Angeles.

Lights off

In solidarity with the worldwide grassroots movement Earth Hour, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu turned off all its lights for an hour on 28 March. The hotel premises were lit by diyas and candles and guests actively participated in this global initiative.

E-shares

Prabhu Bank has signed an agreement to work as a depository participant (DP) with CDS and Clearing Limited. As per the agreement, the bank’s shares can be traded electronically by opening a demat account.



Top of the world

Carlsberg has unveiled the Barclays Premier League official football signed by four Liverpool FC players in Nepal. The company will be taking autographs of Carlsberg consumers to Mount Everest along with the signed ball.



Seeing is believing

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal handed over Rs 5.5 million to Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology as a part of its ‘Seeing is Believing’ initiative. The program has a target of raising USD 100 million for the prevention of avoidable blindness.



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CYNTHIA CHOO

“First Nepali, then Catholic”

This Easter, Nepal’s Catholics fast for spiritual renewal

Julian Lama, 25, has avoided meat for more than a month now. He is among Nepal’s 8,000 Catholics who are fasting in preparation for Easter on Sunday. Nepal’s Catholics are a minority within a minority – they

represent a tiny fraction of the total population of Christians, which the 2011 National Population and Housing Census put at 375,699, but the Federation of National Christians Nepal estimates at 2.5 million.

Lama converted with his family 15 years ago, and says: “Fasting is a physical sacrifice to compliment spiritual renewal. After Easter, we have to keep these habits and continue to be a good person.”

Many Nepali Catholics converted when they were much older. Uma Thapa, 24, became a Christian after marrying Raju who was born Catholic. “I remember watching my neighbour pray and I had already wanted to attend church,” she said. However she didn’t tell her family until after marriage.

Till this day, Thapa attends pujas with her family who are Hindu. “Everybody is living in the same culture, we need to understand the differences in each other’s religions,” explains her husband. In the same way, many non-Catholics also attend mass.

The assimilation of different religions in Nepal is physically represented in the architecture of the Assumption Church in Dhobighat as well. During offerings, *arati* is done with flowers and a candle. On the walls, biblical scenes are depicted on thangka paintings. Lotus flowers are carved onto the wooden doors. The canticles are translated in Nepali and resound to the beat of the madal and the melodies of a harmonium.

Despite conceding that Nepal is a country with relative religious freedom, Raju Thapa said that religion is still a sensitive issue. “I don’t talk about religion with my friends, just to avoid getting into

an argument,” he said. Julian Lama remembers there were misconceptions about Catholics in Nepal when he converted in 2000. “People used to think Catholics were forcefully converting people and received funding from other countries,” he said.

Despite the ‘negative mindset’ against the Catholic community in Nepal, it has grown from 300 to 8,000 in 30 years, according to Father Boniface Tigga, S.J. of Nepal Jesuit Society.

Sunil Shrestha, 32, thinks that if the community was bigger, it may have had better representation at the national level. “Sometimes I feel like nobody can hear our voice because we are so few,” he said.

Being from a minority religion also arises in occasional misunderstandings, says Raju: “Sometimes I am teased by my friends but I don’t take it to heart as I understand we have different beliefs.”

The four Catholic churches around Kathmandu Valley continue to open doors for Catholics and non-believers alike, and on Palm Sunday this week 500 devotees held up palm leaves in symbolic remembrance of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. 🇳🇵

Cynthia Choo and Stéphane Huët





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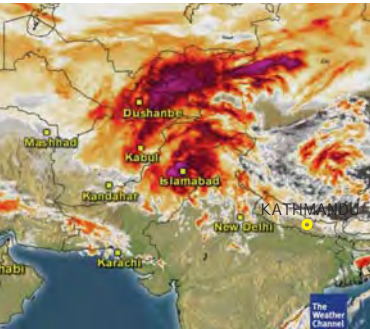
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That huge westerly front arrived late but delivered a whammy on Monday with 15mm of rain. Not unseasonal, but the intensity and dimensions of the system were unusual. We are headed for calmer days now, but a low pressure system threatens Kathmandu on Sunday with chances of afternoon storms.

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CYNTHIA CHOO

CYNTHIA CHOO

She may feature regularly on the cover of Swedish women’s magazine *M-Magasin*, but 68-year-old Amelia Amado refers to the Tharu women of Eastern Nepal as the most beautiful women she has seen in her life.

She credited that to the women’s resilience in the face of poverty, long hours in the fields and taking life as it comes.

“Up in the mountains, you really feel that women have a

tough life, they have to carry heavy loads up and down mountains, they have to get up and work in the fields shortly after giving birth,” she said. “But yet they are not depressed, they are always smiling.”

Amado is publisher and editor of *M-Magasin*, which contributes a fifth of its newsstands sales to UNICEF’s work in Nepal. She visits Nepal regularly to see how the US\$150,000 that the magazine donates to UNICEF every year is being put to use.

Last month she was in Udaypur, speaking to women struggling to cope with uterine prolapse, domestic violence, and the outmigration of men from the villages.

The readership of *M* are Swedish women above 60 years, and Amado says that demographic means it has different interests than magazines meant for young women. For example, the magazine worked on a pink ribbon campaign to raise awareness about breast cancer in Sweden, and has also donated to projects in Ethiopia.

Thus, when Ingeborg Ekblom of UNICEF Sweden approached Amado about contributing to UNICEF Nepal, the editor didn’t need much convincing. However, when she decided to donate part of her magazine’s profits to improve lives of children and women in Nepal, she never thought that it would be a life-changing experience for her

as well.

“In the beginning I cried. I felt that I had to save every girl and be Mother Teresa,” she said, “but you soon become practical and try to achieve as much as you can to help.”

After every visit, Amado writes seven or more feature articles about child labour, female health volunteers, and para-legal committees that help rural Nepali women. Amado has to bargain with her layout editor to get all the articles published.

Amado tried hard to persuade the magazine to give her the space so that by writing about issues in Nepal there will be a multiplier effect on donations that UNICEF

receives. Despite seeing how women struggle in a patriarchal society, Amado says she is also struck by how much solidarity there is among Nepali women.

“Women are speaking up now, they are telling each other that it’s not okay to be beaten by your husband and it is not okay to be forced into an early marriage,” she said. “It is as if there is an army of women supporting each other.”

This is why Amado says her stories on Nepal may highlight problems, but they also end on a hopeful note: “It is not a sob story all the time, we make it hopeful, and try to motivate people back in Sweden to want to help.” 🇳🇵

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EVENTS

Hagen’s clicks,

Exhibition of Toni Hagen’s previously unpublished photographs of Kathmandu taken from 1950 to 1957. 4 to 8 April, 2.30pm, Patan Museum, (01)4231438



Art Market,

A place to sell and buy art -- paintings, prints, posters and design products. 4 April, 12 to 3pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa, (01)5006665, contact@image-ark.com

Me and the Other,

Combining theatre, classic and contemporary music and dance, *Me and the Other* tells the story about how cultural heritage and gender influences an individual’s perception of others. Rs 300, Rs 200 (students), till 4 April, 5.15 pm, Mandala Theatre Nepal, Anamnagar, (01)6924269, info@mandalatheatre.com, www.mandalatheatre.com

Trash-free Tundikhel,

An awareness campaign against littering in public. 4 April, 8am to 10am, Tundikhel, (01)4226471, info@cleanupnepal.org.np, www.cleanupnepal.org.np

Understanding economics,

A talk by Chandan Sapkota, economics officer at Asian Development Bank, on economic problems of Nepal, followed by a Q&A session. 4 April, 10.45am to 1pm, Café & Shop Mitini, Lajimpat, 9803097951, info@cleanupnepal.org.np, www.cleanupnepal.org.np

Celebrating art,

Six days of free workshops for children and adults in celebration of Sattya Collective’s fourth anniversary. 6 to 11 April, Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel, (01)5523486, collective@sattya.org, www.sattya.org

Giving reasons to smile

A gala dinner organised by Qatar Airways in support of CNN Hero 2012 Pushpa Basnet’s Early Childhood Development Centre. All proceeds from the event will go towards expanding the centre’s “Butterfly Home” which currently provides shelter to 50 children. Tickets from Rs 4000, 8 April, 6.30pm to 11.30pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza,

Documentary show,

Screening of *3 Shamans* and *Women of Mountains*, followed by interaction with the filmmakers. 4 and 9 April, 5.30pm, Alliance française of Kathmandu, Tripureshwor, (01)4241163, general.afk@gmail.com



Tahachal, (01)4440722, info@periwinkletrns.com

Oral history,

An intensive course which teaches the key elements of theory, methodology and practice of oral history and digital archiving. Application deadline 4 April, workshop from 21 to 25 April, 10am to 5pm, photo.circle, Arun Thapa Chowk, (01)5013501, www.nepalpicturelibrary.org

Heritage ride,

A 60km bicycle ride to explore the seven world heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley on the occasion of International Day for Monuments and Sites. Rs 500, 18 April, 9841729965, tdl.p4p@gmail.com

In retrospective,

An exhibition of the works of Nepali draftsman, Birendra Pratap Singh, from 1971 to 2015. Till 26 April, Nepal Art Council Gallery, Babar Mahal, (01)4218048, www.siddharthaartgallery.com

Women’s exhibition,

Nine Nepali artists get together for a group exhibition, Kedar Bhakta Mathema. Till 30 April, Newa Chen Art Gallery, Kulimha, Kobahal, Patan, (01)5533532, www.kalavoice.com

DINING



Manny’s,

Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Crispy Crunch Potatoes and don’t forget their signature Manny’s Spicy Wings. All served with fine hospitality in an excellent space. Jawalakhel, (01)5536919



Aalishan,

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Degaa Resto Lounge,

For authentic Newari and Indian cuisine. Kumaripati, (01)5008679

Chez Caroline,

Authentic ambience, exquisite French food, glorious sunshine and more. Babar Mahal Revisited, (01)4263070

Thrilling BBQ,

Choose your own prime meat among fish fillet, pork chop, chicken drumstick to accompany assorted fresh veggies. Rs 1500 per person inclusive of a glass of Carlsberg beer or Coke, every Friday, 6.30pm to 9.30pm, Mandarin Terrace, Everest Hotel, New Baneshwor



Embers,

A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. Krishna Gali, Pulchowk, (01)5534766, embers.ktm@gmail.com, www.embers-restaurant.com

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MUSIC

Cadenza live,

The famous Nepali jazz band plays on the occasion of the Jazz Appreciation Month.

3 April, 7.30pm, Base Camp,
Arun Thapa Chowk, 9841226397,
pareshkshrestha@gmail.com

Dancing in the sun,

Welcome summer with the tenth edition of Sundance Music Festival.

18 and 19 April, The Last Resort,
Sindhupalchok, 01-4700525,
info@thelastresort.com.np,
www.thelastresort.com.np



Universal Religion,

A four-day music fest celebrating the best in EDM.

95 €, 24 to 27 April, Kakani, 9802013960,
info@urnepal.com, kgarira@gmail.com,
www.urnepal.com



Reggae Xplosion,

Put on your dancing shoes as Kathmandu's favourite reggae outfit Joint Family takes stage.

Rs 300, 3 April, 8pm, House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172, sanzey@hotmail.com

EDM summer,

An electronic dance music event with DJs from Nepal and Dubai.

4 April, 1pm onwards, 1905, Kantipath,
9803298511



Music journalism,

Journalist and musician Matt Warnock will give training on self-promotion for musicians, guitar and improvisation classes, and a musical journalism workshop.

4 to 13 April, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory,
Jhamsikhel, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np

GETAWAYS

Balthali Village Resort,

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Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818

The end of the universe,

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Jhule mountain resort,

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Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park,
Lapsipedi-3, Jhule, (01)6212399



Waterfront Resort,

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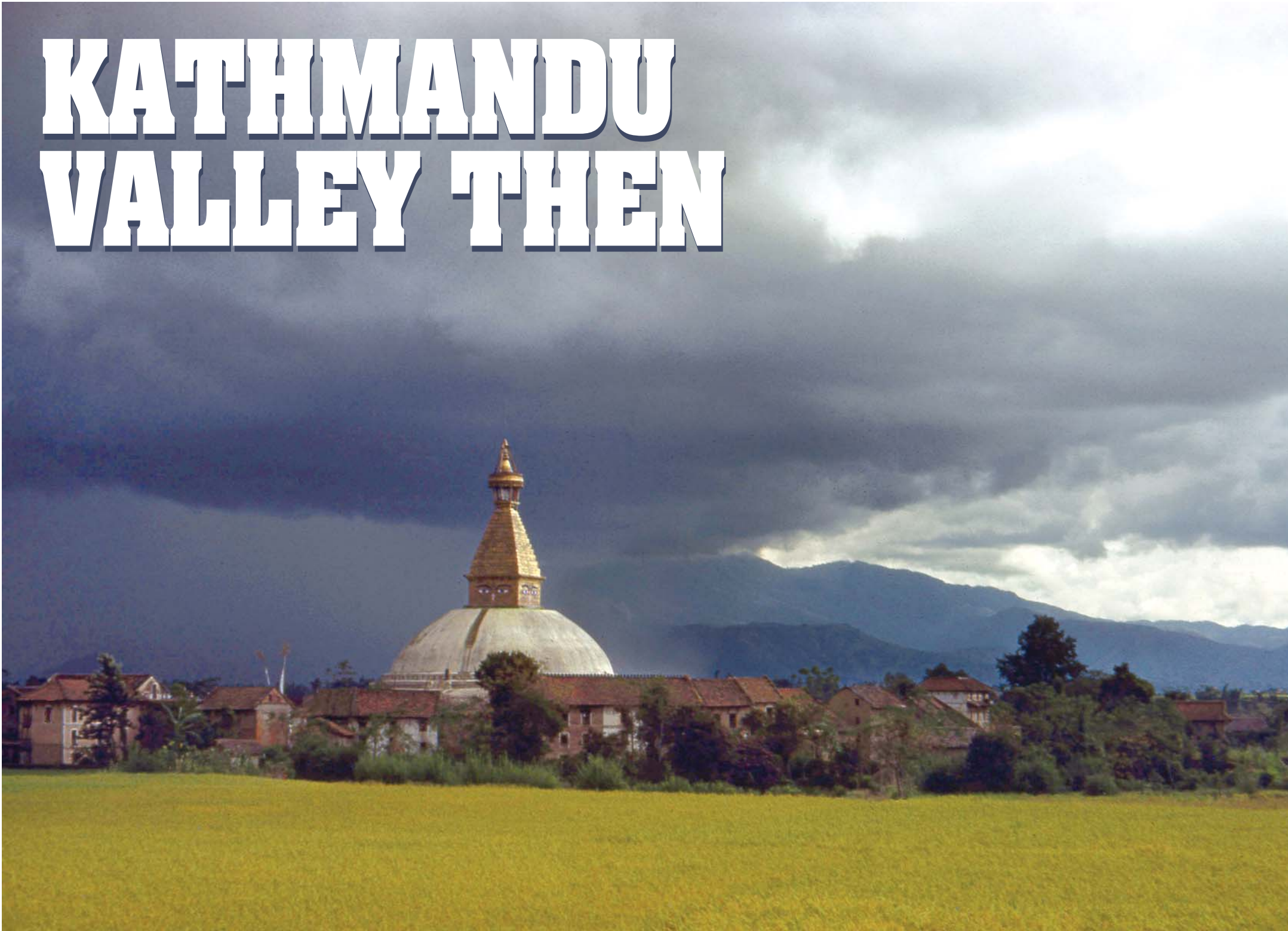
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KATHMANDU VALLEY THEN



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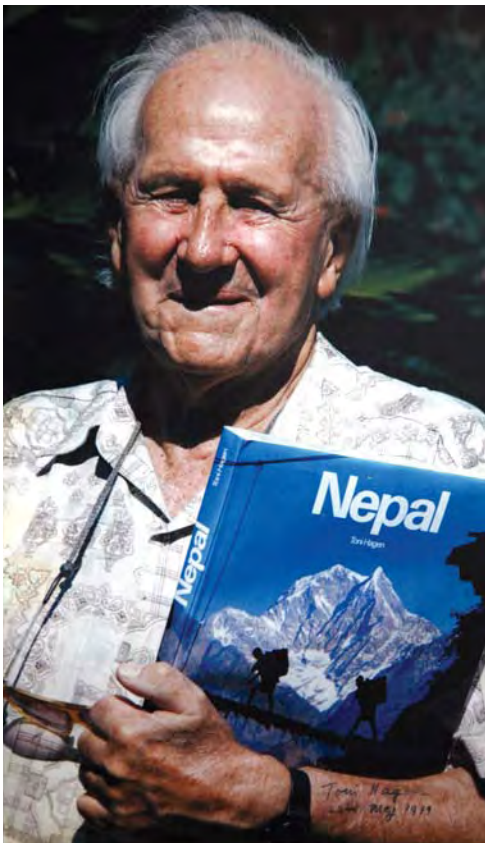
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Swiss geologist-turned-development guru Toni Hagen first came to Nepal in 1950, travelled 14,000km criss-crossing the country on foot over 12 years, and took thousands of photographs and 16mm film.

Among the books Hagen wrote, the multiple editions of *Nepal*, are still a classic – both as a geography text book and a sustainable development blueprint for the country.

Hagen came to Nepal 62 years ago because he felt landlocked and mountainous Nepal had a lot in common with Switzerland, and could be made in its image. Hagen's pictures and book introduced Nepal to the world. Now, his daughter Karen has found hitherto unpublished photographs from her father's collection, 40 of which will be on exhibition at the Patan Museum from 4-8 April on the occasion of Heritage Week.



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Exhibition of Toni Hagen’s photographs from 1950-57.

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Having grown up watching sci-fi films with my father and my brother, delighting in everything from the old *Star Trek* episodes, to the *Star Wars* trilogy, and then branching off to watch everything else that was vaguely decent in the genre (David Lynch's



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

much maligned *Dune* from 1984 comes to mind), I have always been slightly alarmed by people who claim they do not like science fiction. To me this exclusion of a wonderful genre is synonymous (perhaps a tad unfairly) with a lack of imagination; perhaps even an inability to see past the blatantly

obvious.
In the case of Christopher Nolan's hugely acclaimed and tremendously successful blockbuster *Interstellar* though, the film-makers suffer from just a little too much imagination and a certain excess of creativity borne out of the hubris that comes with so much success in one's chosen field.
Sci-fi lovers, do not be disappointed though. I am not saying that *Interstellar* is unwatchable, all I am saying is unless you have the ability to watch the film in the 75mm film print on an IMAX screen (as intended by Nolan), you will most likely not be blown away by this very ambitious, very confusing film.
The premise of the film is classic sci-fi. The planet is dying and Cooper (played by Matthew McConaughey as the every man, albeit also a trained former NASA pilot turned farmer) must leave

his ten-year-old daughter Murph (Mackenzie Foy) to travel through a wormhole to try and track down another habitable planet. Due to various, inexplicable (at least to me) scientific anomalies and the presence of a black hole titled, suitably "Gargantua", Cooper and his fellow heroic space travellers, which includes Anne Hathaway as Amelia Brand, the daughter of Cooper's former mentor Professor John Brand (Michael Caine), travel to another galaxy where time is warped by the black hole causing an hour on one of the planets to translate to seven years in Earth time.
As Cooper and Amelia (and a few other surprising characters) struggle to find a habitable planet for the human race, Murph, who has never forgiven her father for leaving her grows up to become a NASA scientist herself (the adult Murph is played by the lovely Jessica Chastain), desperate to solve the equation that John Brand has been working on for years so that she may be able to follow her father.
As the science in the film grows ever more complex, so too does the storyline which involves five dimensional space that folds time and other equally confounding, but scientifically, possibly accurate (so the film-makers claim vigorously) suppositions, that ultimately tie up this strange but sometimes beautiful film quite neatly. Watch it, but remember to suspend your disbelief.

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■ Trailer

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HAPPENINGS



WELCOME BACK: President Ram Baran Yadav arrives at the Tribhuvan International Airport on Wednesday after a week-long visit to China where he met Chinese President Xi Jinping and attended Boao Forum for Asia Conference in Hainan.



FELICITATION: National Women Commission on the occasion of its 14th anniversary felicitates social worker Dil Shova Shrestha of Aama Ghar (right) in Kathmandu on Sunday.



LIVING GODDESS: The Kumari of Kathmandu looks on as her chariot is taken around Basantapur during the Seto Machindranath festival on Sunday.



EDUCATION TIES: Zhang Haizhou (right) of China Daily Asia Pacific hands over scholarship award certificate to Nisha Kunwar, a journalism student at Kathmandu University, at an event held in Hattiban, Lalitpur on Sunday. *China Daily* awarded journalism scholarships to two students.

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BLOSSOMING ART

For botanical artists like Jacqui Pestell, what used to be reproducing precise details of plants for scientific and academic study has developed into an actual form of art called botanical painting.

"Botanical illustrations are published in scientific journals, whereas botanical paintings are what people will hang in their houses," said Pestell who is course director in Botanical illustration at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh (RBGE).

Pestell and five other artists from RBGE recently exhibited their work at Lalitpur's Park Gallery. The three-day exposition also displayed works from Park Gallery's director, Neera Joshi.

"These fourteen paintings demonstrate the different contemporary styles of botanical art," said Pestell.

Joshi, who studied at RBGE added that sometimes, a creative eye is needed as artists can see details that scientists cannot. "Even though these paintings have to reproduce precisely the physical characteristics of plants, each botanical artist has his or her own style," she said.

The exhibition at Park Gallery is also part of a project marking the celebrations for the



KENJI KWOK

Bicentenary of British and Nepali diplomatic relations that will take place in 2016. RBGE artists will highlight the even longer connection that has existed between the two countries as Scottish botanist, Francis Hamilton, made the first ever survey of plants in Kathmandu Valley back in 1801.

"Our mission is to walk in the footsteps

of Dr Hamilton, who was known as 'the Father of Nepali Botany'," Pestell told *Nepali Times*. In their research field trips in Kathmandu Valley, RBGE artists will be accompanied by botanical expert, Sangeeta Rajbhandary of Tribhuvan University.

"We will focus on ethnobotany and collect information about Nepali flora to

create new artworks that will be exhibited at RBGE in July 2016," said Pestell.


Besides their field research, Pestell with other RBGE artists, Işık Güner, Lyn Campbell and Sharon Tingey will be sharing their knowledge of botanical art through a series of workshops at the Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre (KCAC) next week.

Even though Joshi runs workshops on botanical art at Park Gallery, she admits the art form has yet to gain popularity in Nepal.

"I will be pleased if I could find more talented botanical artists," said Joshi. "We hope this project will inform more people about botanical art as well as increase awareness about the importance of Nepali flora."

Unlike Nepal, botanical art has gained immense popularity in Great Britain over the past 20 years, according to Lyn Campbell. "I think it's because people are now more aware of the importance of protecting their natural heritage," said Pestell.

Despite the increasing use of digital technologies in publication, RBGE artists said no one does botanical by drawing solely on a computer.

"Even photography cannot show all details," said Pestell. "Only illustrators and painters can reproduce a plant precisely."  *Stéphane Huët*

www.parkgallery.com.np
www.kathmanduarts.org

Koto's commitment to creating a uniquely Japanese experience for its diners in Nepal is evident even in its third branch along the Pulchowk road.

A painting of Japanese samurais greets diners before they enter the dining room. An open kitchen lines the side of the restaurant, while wooden tables and chairs fill up the rest of the restaurant space in a quintessentially, orderly, Japanese fashion. Floor seating is also available at the back of the restaurant.

The restaurant offers an array of appetisers and light bites such as yakitori, tofu or sushi. The maki sushi (Rs 590) came with generous slices of smoked salmon and crunchy cucumbers. Packed in authentic Japanese rice, the maki sushi was a delicious, but slightly heavy appetiser for two.

If you're looking for a lighter start to your Japanese meal, go for the tofu dishes instead. Koto offers a variety of tofu appetisers from fried tofu (Agey) (Rs 250) to cold tofu (Hiyayakko) (Rs 220).

The mixed tempura set (Rs 880) is a hearty main course that came with fried chicken, miso soup,



pickles (oshinko) and rice. It was a feast for one, and can even be shared amongst two.

The wings and drumsticks were deep-fried in a well-seasoned batter, making the skin crisp and tasty. Though it was fried to a perfect brown, the meat was still surprisingly moist on the

inside. It was a delectable dish that was slightly reminiscent of another Japanese side dish - chicken karaage.

Diners who do not wish to order a full tempura set would be glad to know that the fried chicken is served a la carte as well, at Rs 275.

The star of the set was of course, the tempura. The batter-covered vegetables and seafood stacked on top of each other on

Koto Restaurant



PICS: KENJI KWOK

an unassuming ceramic plate looked impressive when served. It was equally impressive taste-wise.

The batter was light, crispy and not too greasy and did not overpower the flavour of the seafood and vegetables. The use of fresh, succulent prawns and fish also elevated the tempura set, making it worth the expensive price tag.

The tempura and chicken was served with a bowl of aromatic miso soup that complemented the fried dishes perfectly. Soft

tofu pieces and sprigs of chopped spring onion complemented the smooth, salty broth deliciously.

If you're dining alone or looking for a less filling main, I'd recommend ordering a Donburi (rice bowl). The Katsu Don (pork cutlet and egg, served on rice) is a good option. The rice bowl was packed with fried pork slices mixed with egg. Though the pork was tasty, the lack of sautéed onions in the dish made it slightly bland overall.

Still, the Katsu Don was good for one. Also, priced at Rs 520, it was less expensive than a set meal or bento.

To complete the Japanese dining experience, waiters consistently served Japanese tea throughout the meal, making dining at Koto a delicious and pleasant experience.  *Cynthia Choo*

How to get there: Koto in Lalitpur is located on the second floor of Shaky Building in Harihar Bhawan, right opposite to Sajha Central Office.

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Cheating is a choice, not a mistake

Hi,
Let's talk about commitment: it is a big deal because it means you made a promise to the other person to stay together,



ASK ANJANA ANYTHING
Anjana Rajbhandary

which may or may not work out. But while someone is in a committed relationship, and cheating happens- it shows lack of respect for the relationship

and the partner. It is human to be attracted to other people, even when you are committed, but it is what you choose to do about the feelings that show the strength or weakness of your relationship. Send your questions to askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com or @AnjyRajy

Dear Anjana,
I am an unmarried professional woman and have been in a relationship with a married man for three years. His wife does not know and he has a child. He says he is with his wife only because of their child. He tells me he will leave his wife when the time is right, and that he loves me. No

one knows about us because we do not interact in public at all. I know this is wrong but I love him. I have been turning down marriage proposals, hoping that one day he'll leave his wife to be with me. Am I being stupid? What should I do?
- Confused, yet hopeful

AR: It is difficult for me to answer this question as there is no good answer for such a situation.

I do not think you have taken the time to consider how this is affecting his wife, she probably knows - it has been 3 years. If you did consider the presence of the wife, irrespective of the state of their marriage, and still continued

to pursue this 'affair' then I am not sure if I can say much. There are no gray areas in cheating, it is very black and white.

Put yourself in her shoes: When people get cheated on, it causes them this pain that you will never understand till it happens to you. It scars people and makes them question their faith in love and themselves. Once cheated on, people change forever. They recover but it takes a long time. Cheating does not 'just happen', two parties consciously choose to make it happen.

To be honest, if he has not left his wife yet, he will probably not leave her for you. If he wanted to be with you, he would be with you

now. Let's say, he does leave his wife for you, the chances of him leaving you for someone more attractive and younger are high. How can you be sure that you are the only one he is having an affair with, given his time management skills?

No one can tell you what to do because it is your decision. (Most people deserve to be with someone who adores them, you may still have a chance at happiness but first you have to let go and move forward.)

If you ask me what makes me credible to assume what his wife is feeling- it is because I know people who have been on the receiving end of infidelity. 🍷

GIZMO by YANTRICK



With their new flagship phone Elife S7, Gionee has proven that it is not only fixated on making its products slimmer, but has also focused on improving the performance benchmarks to keep up with the demands of new applications.

Even though you may not notice much difference in the thickness of the phone compared to its predecessor, you will be treated to the new Amigo 3.0 operating system, which is based on the latest Android 5.0 Lollipop – the first in their line up of smartphones.

Updated with a bigger 5.2" Super AMOLED screen display and longer battery life of

2750mAh, the newly announced Elife S7 is set to appeal to users who enjoy playing mobile games on the go or watching videos in Full HD (1080p). The grooved sides of the phone provides a comfortable hold while not compromising on the premium build of its aviation-grade alloy body, complemented by Corning's highly scratch-

SLIM AND STRONG

resistant Gorilla Glass 3 on its front and back.

Gionee has included a MediaTek MT6752 1.7GHz octa-core CPU, which critics say may further improve battery life but not necessarily perform better than a quad-core with a greater clock speed. Then again, the iPhones have been running smoothly on just a dual-core processor. The company has also taken heed from leading brands like Samsung and Apple to improve its front facing camera to 8MP from the previous 5MP.

While a dual-sim functionality brings convenience to regular travellers and businessmen, who have to otherwise carry two phones in order to separate their personal line from work, I was hoping that Gionee would go a step further by improving its internal memory space or processor

instead. This would be a widely welcomed move as it now only has 16GB of internal memory, without the option to add on an external memory card.

The overall look and feel of the Elife S7 may look familiar to Sony Experia users but it comes at a much affordable price. If you are currently still on the Elife S5.1 or you're looking for a new mobile phone in the market, the improvement in specifications, performance, and new operating system in the Elife S7 makes it a worthy upgrade. 🍷

YANTRICK'S VERDICT: The Elife S7 may fall short of being the ultimate upgrade, but given its attractive price tag and specs, it is definitely worth a look.

Get Solared, because load-shedding is there to stay!

The load shedding is back to 12 hours per day after the breather during SLC exams. According to Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, 22 million Nepali people face household air pollution (HAP) which causes 19533 deaths per year. The death per year from HAP equals to deaths from diarrhea, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, combined. This does not take into account damages and deaths from fire accident caused by kerosene powered lamps. Nepal ranks 53 out of 64 countries in the Energy Development Index (EDI) (0.102) and most of Nepal's total energy comes from traditional biomass fuels (87.1 percent). These are some facts that give an account of Country's energy poverty. Nepal's power shortage has fuelled the growth of clean energy market that include solar energy for electricity, water heating and cooking purposes, improved cooking stoves, LED bulbs.

Founded in 2012, Ecoprise provides clean energy solutions to base-of-pyramid (BOP) communities in Nepal to create economic,

environmental and social benefits. So far Ecoprise has completed installation of over 5000 Solar electricity projects, 250 solar water heating projects, sold 2000 solar lanterns and 10,000 LED bulbs since 2012. The goal is to reach one million people in Nepal by 2019. The business model is named 4 "A" which aim to remove four "A" (awareness, availability, affordability and after-sales service) barriers of off-grid energy service.

A part of this business model is SunFin which increases affordability of clean energy solutions through financing mechanism. SunFin provides easy solar financing to homes and offices in partnership with commercial banks. The 5% internet rates for solar home loans are probably lowest options available in Nepal and one does not require collateral to qualify for these loans. Now customers do not need to be scared of high upfront costs associated with solar electricity installation. Ecoprise has a comprehensive customer care program to ensure quality after-



sales service.

In recent years many private companies have become involved in the sale of clean energy technologies in Nepal, but none of them have a business model which allows locals to participate as distributors, or use technology as a means of social change. Conventional businesses are not focused on low-profit rural settings and those that do, are dependent on subsidies, donations and grants rather than creating markets for their products. Ecoprise plans to roll out its Spark program to improve trust, awareness and availability in rural Nepal. It is also in communication with international partners to develop financing mechanism to power community learning centres, public schools and health centres serving

last-mile communities in Nepal. Ecoprise has been incubated by The DO School (www.thedoschool.org) which empowers people to turn their ideas into action and create real impact.

Ecoprise recently started an exclusive store and after-sales service centre of clean energy technologies in Basundhara, Kathmandu. The store is a one-stop centre for consumers looking to buy clean energy solutions. The store is offering up to 60% discount on various products to mark Nepali New Year, 2072. Grab it!!



www.meroecoprise.org | Tel: 4356592

Harder to forgive than forget

“Have Nepalis forgiven the horrors in the war or have they simply forgotten?”

QIANYI QIN

Wandering in Kathmandu along streets lined with handicraft shops and admiring the country’s breathtaking scenery, it is hard to imagine that there was a war raging in this land till nine years ago.

There are posters of Chairman Mao with his enigmatic smile at some street corners in Kathmandu, a rare sight back in my home city of Beijing. A large portrait of him does look down on Tiananmen Square, and every day thousands of visitors from all over China come here to take pictures in front of the Great Helmsman.

Memories of the Mao era are fading in China. Beijing urbanites today walk along fancy boutiques on wide boulevards where brutal atrocities against citizens and intellectuals took place during the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution 50 years ago.

Here in Kathmandu, I wondered, have Nepalis forgiven the horrors in the war or have they simply forgotten? I didn’t learn about the violence of Mao’s regime in school, where the history textbook only lists dates for the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and summarises them in a few sentences. The great famine, the torture and killings are not mentioned.

My Grandpa was a history teacher in a high school in Ningbo of Zhejiang province during the Anti-Rightist Movement in the 1950s. Teachers were threatened since all intellectuals were potential ‘rightists’, and the party set a quota in each area for the number of ‘rightists’ who had to be punished.

Every knock on the door set off panic. Everyday more and more of his colleagues were publicly humiliated by their own students and later forced to work in labour camps in remote areas. There was one young music teacher in my Grandpa’s school, a talented pianist, who drowned himself in the toilet rather than



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KIYOKO OGURA / A PEOPLE WAR

ANTI-CULTURAL: Students perform a skit during the Cultural Revolution in China’s Jiangsu Province in 1974 (left) and Nepali students studying a ‘revolutionary curriculum’ in Rolpa in 2002 raise the ‘red salute’.

face public humiliation and torture. Then one day, my Grandpa was also dragged out by his own students to the auditorium, where they verbally and physically abused him in front of hundreds of others. Did he ever forgive his students? All I know is that he kept on teaching for 30 more years and many of his students made it to top colleges. Some still came to visit him, and he always looked happy and proud to see them.

He’d welcome them into the living room and talk for hours over cups of tea. I don’t know if he remembered the ones who had humiliated him, but he seemed to have forgiven them even though no one ever apologised.

Can anyone really forgive without an honest acknowledgment of the trauma, and genuine repentance? In recent years, some former red guards have apologised to their teachers. Shen Xiaoke, now 63, wrote a letter to his former high school secretary, Cheng Bi, now 87. Another student, Hu Bin, also apologised for forcing her into writing a letter of confession. After reading the letters, Cheng expressed gratitude to the students,

comforting them that they were also victims.

But those who said sorry are a minority. Shen said he could apologise because he did not physically abuse his teachers.

“Those who made comparatively lesser mistakes are more fit to write the apology letter: we have less pressure,” he said.

For those who beat ‘Rightists’ to death, it’s harder to gather up the courage to apologise and few were prosecuted. But they have to live with haunting memories and guilt.

More than 50 years have passed since the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution. Most of the victims are either dead or in their 80s. Though the Party revoked most of the convictions, it still insists that the Anti-Rightist Movement was correct -- only that the scale was too big and many (about 550,000) were falsely convicted.

Those sent to labour camps were re-admitted to their former institutions but were denied the salaries for the 22 years spent in detention. Compensation for families of the victims was not adequate and their demands for genuine apology from the state are ignored.

Their wounds have not healed



but memories are fading. Young Chinese want to move on. There is no museum dedicated to those who suffered, while Mao chic souvenirs are popular among tourists.

The mainland media is mute on sensitive historical issues. Scholars overseas have been actively studying the Anti-Rightist Movement and documenting the stories of the victims, but their books are heavily censored and banned in mainland China.

The state wants the people to forget the horrors of the past, and many Chinese seem to want to go along with it. Many like my Grandpa may have chosen to forgive, but I can tell from his eyes that he always carried the burden of memory that left a permanent scar in his heart.

It is harder to forgive than to forget. To forget, one simply hides from the past and doesn’t look back. But to forgive takes true courage. It is a painful psychological process that requires complete honesty and deep self-introspection. As Lewis B Smedes put it: “When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it.”

I hope the Nepali people

will bring justice to the victims and honour the history of the abused and humiliated. It is important to pursue justice for the victims and their families before time erases memories so as to prevent the abuse of power and ensure the rule of law in the post-conflict period. Nepal’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a good start, but only a victim-centered approach will work.

A nation is composed of individual human beings, and every one of them has a conscience. A nation can choose to be honest with its past, acknowledge those who suffered and were humiliated, try its best to right the wrongs, ask for forgiveness and then move forward with a clear conscience.

Or, it can choose to forget, sanitise wrongdoings and drift along in collective amnesia. At the end of the day, the true greatness of a nation does not lie in its wealth, but in the honesty and courage with which it confronts its past. 🇳🇵



Qianyi Qin is a Chinese citizen and a student of Humanities at Yale University in the United States. She was recently in Nepal studying human rights.



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Remembering

Nepal's ageing population brings a new problem that families and the government have little knowledge of

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has described dementia as a tidal wave that will hit unprepared governments with 47.5 million people suffering from the illness.

Alzheimer's disease, which accounts for up to 80 per cent of the cases of dementia, causes memory loss and affects other mental abilities that interfere with daily life. Dementia is an umbrella term for other neurological conditions that affects brain function, not necessarily just memory loss. Unfortunately, current treatment of dementia merely slows down the progression of the disease, and without a cure anytime soon the only antidote is to provide healthcare personnel with professional training.

Last week, the Alzheimer and Related Dementia Society Nepal (ARDS Nepal) organised a workshop for government ministers, advocacy groups, non-government organisations and other concerned parties to form a Nepal Dementia Action Alliance and to draw up a Fight Dementia Action Plan.

At the National Dementia Workshop, Francis Wong who is the Regional Director of Asia Pacific Region for Alzheimer's Disease International, raised concerns over the challenges Nepal faces in dealing with



KENJI KWOK

The next scariest thing to the death of a loved one is having them forget everything about you.

As Nepal's population ages, Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia are expected to rise exponentially, and public health experts say the government needs to start working out a plan to cope with this epidemic. There are an estimated 78,000 people with dementia today, but this is expected to rise to 285,000 by 2050.

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dementia



PICS: KENJI KWOK

this crisis.

“Due to the low awareness of dementia and a lack of knowledge of how to better manage this condition, people with dementia and their families in less developed countries like Nepal generally do not have access to diagnosis or services,” he said.

During the workshop, representatives from Alzheimer’s Australia Vic (AAV) taught health professionals valuable skills in dementia care, from the way they should communicate with dementia patients to conducting of activities. Amelia Suckling of AAV stressed the importance of collaboration with local stakeholders in order for the action plan to be effective.

She said: “We might know dementia, but we don’t know the complexities of the culture, social, and political situation here as well as the locals for the plans to work.”

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare also said they would include a budget for dementia in the next fiscal year.

While it may not be of a concern to those who have yet to care for a loved one with dementia, Ann Reilly of AAV



said that will not be the case very soon and Nepal has to be prepared for the worst to come.

“With increasing number of people with dementia, there will also be more and more people with a reason to understand dementia,” Reilly said.

As Nepal’s youth bulge ages, its ageing population will grow three times faster than the national average due to the increase in life expectancy. Yet, society is still struggling with lack of awareness and the social stigma of having an elderly in the family with dementia, often preventing help from being rendered.

Chairperson of Ageing Nepal,

Krishna M Gautam, said: “The abnormal behaviour of dementia is generally accepted as a part of growing old, or madness which is falsely believed to be hereditary. People often don’t want to marry into a family with an elder with dementia so they find ways to hide the problem within the family instead of seeking special care for them.”

Gautam, who had firsthand experience caring for his late father with dementia, described how it also affects family members. He said: “The biggest challenge was coping with the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness when I knew

that my father cannot be cured. It involves making decisions for another person without knowing what he or she is thinking or feeling.”

While we wait for a cure, Nepali families desperately need more awareness about the disease, quality dementia services that provide residential care, diagnosis, training for healthcare professionals, as well as providing drugs for Alzheimer’s disease at a subsidised cost.

Waiting for tomorrow is not an option. After all, many young Nepalis today may be afflicted with the disease later on in life. 🇳🇵



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stopped going to school.

"There were days when I was depressed, but I was able to pull through with my family's support. Not all are this lucky," she says.

In 2001, ten years after her accident, Shrestha's story reached Castle Hill Rotarian Ron Marcus, who had been leading medical volunteer teams to Nepal. Marcus contacted the Appliance and Limb Centre in Australia, which fitted Shrestha with prosthetic limbs and trained her for free.

After returning from Australia, Shrestha hosted a program on people with disabilities on Capital FM. Two years ago she released her debut album and is currently working on her second.

Shrestha is an executive member of Independent Living Center, an organisation working towards empowering people with disabilities to live an independent life.

"We have built a wheelchair, which is a first in Nepal. Apart from that we are working on transplanting artificial limbs, providing trainings and creating a better environment for people with disability to lead a normal life," says Shrestha.

Her busy schedule leaves her no time to think about what's missing in her life. "I have been able to understand life better because of the accident," she says.

Moving on

Pradeep Bashyal in *Nepal*, 29 March

नेपाल

Twenty nine-year-old Kamala Shrestha (*pic*) may be a popular face on TV but only few will know of the Himalayan Television's news reader being a triple amputee.

At 12, Shrestha was electrocuted while trying to retrieve an entangled kite from a high voltage power line. She lost both her arms and her right leg and spent three months in coma.

Unable to move around she



अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Basu Kshitiz in *Annapurna Post*, 28 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Earn love and respect of Nepalis by living and doing well in the country, my advice to former prince Paras.”

RPP-N Chairman Kamal Thapa on Twitter, 2 April



The city's poor

Dambar Krishna Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 March-4 April

हिमाल

Deep Bahadur Puri, a 31-year-old tipper driver, lives in a rented room with his family on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Originally from Ramechhap, Puri moved to the capital a few years ago in search of a better future, but with his salary of less than Rs 10,000 a month, he is struggling to feed his family of four.

"No matter how much I work, I am never able to buy enough food," says Puri.

Earlier this year Puri had sought help from a local NGO which provided his two malnourished children with food for three weeks. Although his children are much healthier now, he fears their condition might worsen any day.

Manoj Adhikari, 34, came to Kathmandu from Sarlahi with his wife five years ago. They started working as street vendors but could not earn enough to rent a room. So they shifted to a shelter on the premises of Pashupati Temple where they continue to live.

Government statistics show the national poverty rate has declined to 23.8 per cent from 41.2 per cent in the last decade, but urban poverty is on the rise. According to Nepal Living Standard Survey, the number of urban poor has grown from 9.55 per cent in 2004-2005 to 15.46 per cent in just five years. The survey also shows that more than 60 per cent of people living in the urban areas do not own houses.

National Planning Commission (NPC)'s former Vice Chair Pitambar Sharma says the portion of the urban population living below poverty line will grow to 20 per cent in three years if economic opportunities are not created. "More people are migrating to cities from rural areas but jobs are not being created in the same proportion," says Sharma.

The urban poor, economists say, are also living in a more deplorable situation than the rural poor as there is no social bonding among the city dwellers.

"In villages, if you do not have food to eat, you can ask your neighbours for help. But in cities like Kathmandu, neighbours rarely know each other," says economist Keshav Acharya.

Former Governor Dipendra Bahadur Chhetri says lack of societal safety net is adding to the misery of the urban poor. "When political parties enforce shutdowns, the poor bear the brunt," he says.

Less than one per cent of the 30,000 NGOs operating in Nepal are working for the urban poor.

Economists and sociologists also see a strong correlation between political upheavals and urban poverty. They say political instability have driven hundreds of thousands of families out of their villages and into cities with no financial support.

When asked about the government's initiative to help deal with the problem, Suresh Pradhan, a joint secretary at Ministry of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation said: "We are now holding discussions with all stakeholders and will forward our strategy to the cabinet by the end of the current fiscal year."



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Rato Bangala School, a registered centre for Cambridge International Examinations in Nepal, is seeking keen students for its GCE A Level (Advanced Level) programme. Candidates will be selected through a competitive qualifying entrance examination.

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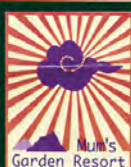
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SAHINA SHRESTHA

Mala, a medical graduate, was studying in China when she began speaking to Mohan, a Nepali businessman living in the US. The two fell in love over the phone, and despite her parents’ opposition Mala married Mohan in 2009.

Within days of the wedding Mohan began to abuse her.

“He would dictate what I wore and how I arranged my closet. He grew extremely possessive,” says Mala.

After Mohan returned to the US, Mala’s in-laws started to taunt her, accusing her of practicing witchcraft and ordering her to abort their unborn daughter. She was physically assaulted by her sister-in-law and not allowed to leave the house or meet her parents.

When Mala was finally able to go to the US, she found out that her husband had been living with another Nepali woman. Still, she continued to stay with him. But after his abuse grew more frequent, Mala decided to go to a domestic violence shelter. Mala is now living by herself, and works as a health care assistant in the US.

Currently, domestic violence makes up 78 per cent of all violence against women cases in Nepal. Out of the 6,835 cases reported in the police last year, 3.62 per cent of the victims had a high school education and more than 4 percent were independent. Among the perpetrators 4.7 per cent were educated till the higher secondary level or above and almost 12 per cent held jobs or ran their own businesses.

“Domestic violence happens at all levels of the society,” says SSP Krishna Gautam of Nepal Police’s Women and Children Service Directorate, “It has nothing to do with education, class, caste or creed.”

According to an annual report published by Women’s Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), 83 per cent of the abused women were literate, of which 21 percent had a higher secondary diploma or above.

Meera Dhungana of Forum for Women’s Law and Development says, “People belonging to the upper and middle classes are more conservative so women from such families are least likely to report abuse. They’d rather file for divorce.”

In addition, many victims do not speak up to save their family’s reputation. Most reported domestic violence cases thus come from victims in rural areas. A weak law against domestic violence also doesn’t encourage a woman to seek justice.

As per Nepal’s Domestic Violence Act 2009, perpetrators can be fined up to Rs 25,000 and/or can be jailed for six months. The meager punishment is what discourages many women



Class, no bar

Violence against women is prevalent in high income families too, they are just better at hiding it.

from filing complaints under the domestic violence act, says Sandhya Sitoula of Centre for Legal Research and Development, which receives hundreds of cases related to violence against women.

Even when the abused registers a complaint with the police the perpetrator isn’t taken into custody. Many opt for reconciliation, and are forced to return home to the same man who abused them.

Lenient punishment, a patriarchal society and our culture of marriage (where women are required to leave their family and adopt a new one) seems to be the factors playing into domestic violence.

Jyotsana Maskay, chairperson of LOOM, an NGO working for women’s safety says: “Domestic violence is a crime and not merely a social problem like many treat it to be.”

Mala says: “I am educated and come from a good family. I never thought this would happen to me and can only imagine what other uneducated women have to go through.”

Mala has filed a partition case against her husband and says she is planning to divorce him soon. ❏

Mala and Mohan are pseudonyms.

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It's a riot out there

Your ex-Loyal Highnesses, Hon'ble ex-Convicts, Fellow-Skeletons Rattling in the Cabinet, Heads of Extra-Constitutional Organisms, Captains of Cottage Industries, ex-Cellencies, Willing Defaulters, Respected Givers-and-Takers of Huge Kickbacks, Overseers and Undertakers, Members of the Medical Mafia, venerable members of the Society of Nepali Intellectuals (Semi-democratic), those of the Journalistic Persuasion, Spooks present whose identities cannot be disclosed but one of them is right here in the front row, third from left in a brown hat and shades, Distinguishable Guests, and last-but-not-least, Shri Rishi Dhamala.

It is both a pleasure and a pain in the butt to be invited here once again today to the Repeater's Club for the Faces to Faeces Program to speak to you about how well the country has been doing since the last erection. Since I am among fellow-oxymorons here I don't need to belabour the obvious and waste your and my time speaking about the great achievements made by this gumment in the past year, thank you so very much.

Actually, if I don't need to tell you about the aforementioned accomplishments, then I don't understand why I am going ahead to do exactly that. This is a question that has been bedeviling me since the dawn of civilisation as we know it. I often ask myself why I keep coming back here to dodge your bricks and bats in Phora like these, and I haven't been able to come up with a satisfactorial answer. But I guess any publicity is good publicity for us politicians.

That is why today I am taking the bold and unprecedented step of departing from my prepared text to speak frankly and to toot my own trumpet here, if I may. It must be clear to all



you political observers, anally retentive analysts and western diplomatic sources who don't want to be quoted by name that, despite some impedimentations and difficulties, we are well on track to write a new constitution in this country. And given our current velocity in knots, present course and heading, we should have a new constitution by 2075 AD, even if Nepal as a nation state has ceased to exist by then.

In fact, just this morning while attending to a call from Nature, I was temporarily disconnected because Nature as usual wasn't calling me on my landline. But when we were reconnected I was naturally delighted, and I think it is proof that things in Nepal are rapidly returning to normalness after the present coalition came to power.

Nepal Telecom needs to be commended

for setting an example for pre-paid and post-paid political appointments to top jobs in public sector enterprises. The government now works on a strict policy under which project chiefs who got their jobs through merit and dint of hard work will self-destruct. I am overcome with nostalgia and emotion when I see how we in the Unfed Marxist-Leninist party are behaving today, it takes me right back to the glory days of the early 1990s. It is business as unusual. Those who say that Nepal was pushed back four decades are wrong, we are exactly where we were 20 years ago.

The other sign of things returning to normalness is that stones are flying again at Baneshwor, the aroma of tear gas once more assail our nostrils outside campuses, and buses and taxis are again being incinerated. It's a riot out there.

We promised to bring you a constitution in due time, and it is my pleasure to inform you today that we are way ahead of schedule. I admit, the level of anarchy hasn't reached last year's intensificacy, we are still behind our objectivity in the arson attacks and enforcing bunds department, but I can assure you that we will set that right starting next week so that we can meet our 2075 target.

Which means that we can be confident about restoring full-blown demagoguery by mid-September and a full-scale constitution by mid-century. Not that it would make any difference to most of you here who are now fast asleep. Hey, will someone please wake up Mr Dhamala?



The Ass

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DIWAKAR CHETTRI



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