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AT ALL OUR OUTLETS

## Everything has changed, but nothing is different

Nepal has changed in 15 years, but the issues we were covering then are still here with us. It has been nearly ten years since the conflict ended. The war has been over for as long as it lasted. But the Nepali people never got to reap the peace dividend. Ostracisation and inequality persist. There is chronic mismanagement, poor governance and lack of accountability.

This issue of *Nepali Times* from July 2001 (below) is headlined 'Ke Garne': the

helpless Nepali shrug. The cartoon on the front page illustrates the post-royal massacre political chaos. The bickering politicians are mostly the same ones still bickering. In a faxed interview the underground Maoist ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai, maintains that the Maoists will never be a parliamentary party. "That would be a great betrayal to the revolutionary aspirations of the masses," he says. Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat has just delivered the war

budget to parliament. The Royal Nepal Army has been sucked into the conflict, and is allocated 17 per cent more, the Nepal Police get a hefty 27 per cent hike. Nepal has been able to survive feckless and incompetent rulers because Nepalis stopped expecting anything from them long ago and built our own coping mechanisms.

*Nepali Times* marks its 15 years this week. We have had a ringside seat to war, a massacre of royals,

the return to absolute monarchy, a people power uprising, ceasefire, and a prolonged political transition. We have witnessed deadly floods, avalanches, blizzards and an earthquake. In this Special Anniversary Issue we take a retro look at the past one-and-half decades.

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Under My Hat Visit Nepal 20

**KE GARNE**

**EXCLUSIVE**

**War budget**

Finance minister Ram Sharan Mahat had no choice but to give the army and police hefty increases in the budget. The army got a 17 percent rise to add up to Rs4.52 billion, about Rs445 million of which is to be spent on hardware. The police (including the armed police) allocation went up even more: 27 percent over last year to Rs5.79 billion. Of that, Rs500 million is for equipment like guns and helicopters. The total security budget is now Rs10.31bn—ten percent of the total. "I had little choice," Mahat told us. "The Maoist activities have been harming the economy, they have targeted industrial production."

What this means is less money for health, education and other services. It is a Catch-22, the most effective weapon against the insurgency is development, but there is less money for it because more is diverted to fighting rebels. The test of the budget is the implementation. And that depends entirely on the insurgency. On that also hinges the ability of the government to keep investors that are already in the country, and attract new ones.

Despite pressures to keep the deficit narrow, projected to be about a third of the total Rs99.79 billion, Mahat has managed to address one of the main problems faced by exporters. He has decided to introduce the "pass book" system and make duty refunds at the customs points rather than from the central coffers—a system that has been a total failure. Back payments are to be handled by issuing exporters five-year debentures at a five percent interest rate.

**“You will enjoy more democratic rights under the New Democracy than you are enjoying today.”**

Baburam Bhattarai, Politburo Member and Chief of the Foreign Relations Department of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) replied in English to written questions sent last week by *Nepali Times*. The Maoist leader replies forthrightly on issues such as the royal massacre, future of the peoples' war, policy towards development aid and trade, the Nepali monarchy, and the "donations" his party is raising from businesses. Following is an unedited transcript of the faxed response:

Nepali Times: After six years of the peoples' war and over 2,000 Nepalis dead, the Nepalese masses so far in the six years of the people's war has been rather on the lower side. Such "prices" in genuine revolutions are paid in millions, and not in thousands. Do you remember the French Revolution? Considering the power and prestige gained by the poor and oppressed masses of the Nepalese countryside during the past six years, the "price" paid for has been definitely worth it.

NT: Is your armed struggle going to be a continuous strategy or do you see the real possibility of that ending for, say, a negotiated settlement?

BB: Whether the armed struggle will continue or not, it depends on the situation. The government says you party is not serious about dialogue, how can we be convinced that you are?

BB: Our Party has time and again expressed its readiness for a meaningful dialogue if the government creates a conducive atmosphere, at least by making public the conditions of the more than 200 "missing" persons from the government custody, among other things. But the government has repeatedly backed out of it. Rather, it has resorted to more fascist measures like over state power through a "negotiated settlement"? You should ask them.



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WIDEN YOUR WORLD



# INTERESTING TIMES

Nepal has changed in 15 years, but the issues we were covering then are still here with us



SUBHAS RAI #30

‘Sign of the times’. That was the title of an editorial of this newspaper on 19 July 2000. In it we had written:

*‘A newspaper does more than hold a mirror to society. It is the mirror itself. Journalism is called history in a hurry. It is also culture, sociology, anthropology and philosophy in a hurry. Nepali Times will aspire to be a true reflection – an English journal to record the life and times of Nepalis in the decades ahead. This newspaper will seek to be informal, lively, clear and direct. Don’t be fooled by the tabloid format, this is a serious paper that tackles serious issues head-on. In a society cursed with extreme inequality, we will speak for the last, the lost and the least. We will be fair, and we will fiercely protect our independence. This is a modern newspaper for a new Nepal. A sign of the times.’*

Today, these goals may seem rather lofty (some may even say prematurely self-congratulatory) but week after week for the past 15 years we have tried in these pages to be a chronicle of the times. And, just as the famous curse, what interesting times they have been.

We have had a ringside seat to war, a massacre of royals, a ceasefire, a prolonged political transition, we have witnessed deadly floods, avalanches, blizzards and earthquakes. Through it all, we have tried to keep our heads above the water and be true to the tenets of our profession, standing up for and holding up the core values of democracy, press freedom and non-violence.

It has been nearly ten years since the conflict ended. The war has been over for as long as it

lasted. But the Nepali people never got to reap the peace dividend. Ostracisation and inequality persist. There is chronic mismanagement, poor governance and lack of accountability.

For about five years after the 1990 People Power Movement we were beginning to see that democracy delivered development, but narrow-minded and near-sighted politicians wasted the opportunity. They never grasped that true legitimacy in a democracy comes from performance, not just elections. The country may have gone from monarchy to republic, from war to peace, but the issues we were covering 15 years ago are the same: lack of the rule of law, political meddling, impunity, investment, infrastructure, devolution and the need for local elections.

Nepal’s population has grown by 6 million in the last 15 years, 18 per cent of the people (mostly young men) are working abroad at any given time. There has been a three-fold increase in petroleum imports from India in five years, mainly to pay for diesel to power generators. Look no further for an example of how we have squandered our potential to be self-sufficient in renewable energy.

Even as we were struggling to find a political fix for these ills through a new constitution, the earthquake struck. A lethargic government was slow off the mark: rescue, relief and rehabilitation were tardy. There was confusion, indecisiveness and smug complacency about delivery. Counterproductive decisions to tax relief goods and turning back offers of help tarnished our image abroad. The government may be happy

with the \$4.4 billion pledged for reconstruction which makes a large chunk of this year’s budget, but there are serious doubts about whether we have the capacity to provide that help to people who need it the most without leakage and delays.

However, the earthquake also brought out the best in Nepalis: our tenacity and willingness to help one another. Individuals and volunteer groups stepped in to fill the gap left by government. The mobilisation was possible because of the spread and reach of social networking sites. One of the most dramatic changes in the past 15 years has been the rise of the social web – nearly 5 million Nepalis now use Facebook. This has transformed the way we share information, get organised and even engage with politics.

Nepal has been able to survive feckless and incompetent rulers because Nepalis stopped expecting anything from them long ago, and built their own coping mechanisms. Everything that has worked in Nepal in the past 20 years has the word ‘community’ in it: community forestry, community radio, community-managed schools and health posts. In Khandbari, a local cooperative sells electricity to the grid to finance two colleges. A returnee from Qatar has started a dairy farm in Nawalparasi that employs 100 people. A program to send young volunteers to teach in rural government schools has dramatically improved the quality of education.

And that is what gives us hope about the next 15 years. The teetering edifice of national government may need retrofitting, but the foundation of Nepali society is solid.

## YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

### FIXING TOURISM

Tourism alone can create millions of jobs for Nepalis (‘Fixing what’s broken’, Editorial, #766). The industry can be easily fixed and developed more if headed by the right people. What’s needed is also proper regulation to ensure quality is maintained.

Kishor Gurung

■ Who is going to fix it? If you mean the current crop of leaders, please do not hold your breath. They had 25 years, look where we are now.

Bikas

### DRAFT CONSTITUTION

■ This draft should be thrown in the gutter (‘Egos at the door, please’, Bidushi Dhungel, #766). It is anti-Nepal and anti-Nepali.

Gopal Prasad Upreti

■ The leaders are trying to present a cut and paste version of the 1990 constitution as a new draft. It is a shame that most of the progressive constitutional clauses introduced in the interim constitution regarding women’s rights have now been removed. Yet, many of us are quiet. It is this apathy towards national issues that has helped breed a group of self-centered politicians who lack the vision to take this country forward.

Damodar

■ Is Nepali politics controlled by a remote control device from India? If no, then why are all the failed politicians of the major political parties going to New Delhi to meet with Mr Modi? Is this really the right time?

Devika Shrestha

### NEPAL-INDIA

Sounds too good to be true (‘India wants to start afresh in Nepal’, #766). Is this the same India that supplied weapons to the Maoists and sheltered them during the conflict? And remember the Rajiv Gandhi embargo on Nepal? Words are cheap.

Puskar Thapa

■ Modi offered to invest in Nepal’s hydropower sector, was ready to buy electricity so that the Nepal government could earn revenue and generate employment for Nepalis. But the so called politicians of Nepal rejected the deal saying they didn’t want Indian companies to invest there. Nepalis have a tendency to protest everything India proposes. This mindset needs to go for Nepal to truly prosper.

Vaibhav

■ Does India want a fresh start because it wants to limit the growing influence of China? While Indians have been dominating and bullying

Nepalis over five decades, the Chinese have been helping quietly like a true friend.

Jitu Thapa

■ We need to get our own house in order before blaming ‘the foreign hand’. Inclusion, education, health care, roads, communication, agro industries, tourism, there is so much work left to be done here. And to all those who think China is a real friend: read about their advances in the South China Sea. There are no friendships at government-to-government level, only interests.

Namah

### ZERO-COST MIGRATION

This policy will not benefit anyone (‘Who is against zero-cost migration and why?’ Om Astha Rai, #766). The labour minister is making money now but once the MOU between Malaysia and Bangladesh gets signed, Nepali workers will bear the brunt.

Yash Kumar

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As a counselor the author could be more patient and considerate (‘Foreign Affairs’, Ask Anjana Anything, #766). You seem to have quickly concluded that this woman would like to leave her husband but for social reasons has not dared. At face value you could be right but you have an extremely

serious responsibility as an adviser here. Divorce can have a devastating life-long effect on the child, this woman may be worse-off in her new relationship, and she is still a relatively young woman who has the potential to gain maturity. She may learn with time that such feelings are common, that people don’t have an affair or divorce when they feel lonely and find a third person attractive, and may come to accept that commitment is more important than instant gratification. You could have advised her to improve her communication with her husband. Counseling is not about telling people what one thinks is the best for the person but giving her/him the options (without being influenced by one’s own values and beliefs) and supporting her to make a decision. The more serious the potential consequences of the decision your client makes (or the counselor influences to make) the more considerate and serious the adviser must be.

R Rai

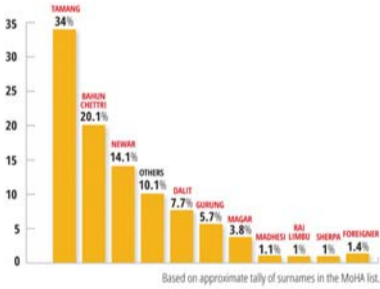
### ASS

This is the funniest, most-biting satire I have ever read (Advisory on advisories, Backside by Ass, #766). Travel advisories are colonial hypocrisy. Ass, may I kiss you?

Dina

Times

## THIS WEEK



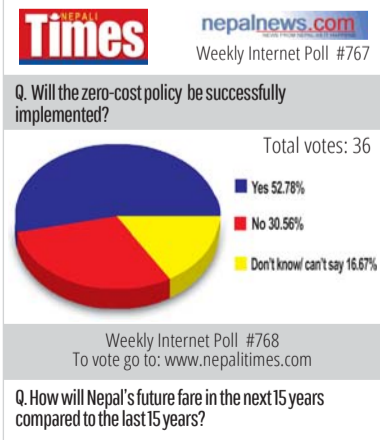
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# The Constitution as if the people mattered

Top leaders have packaged greed and prejudice in a draft constitution, but there is still time to correct it

In my last column, I argued that the legitimacy and ownership of the draft constitution will be seriously questioned if major political parties try to ram through the process, overlooking concern expressed by other stakeholders including women and the Madhesis. Two weeks later, at least the NC and UCPN(M) leaders are unwilling to take the political risk of

When the draft was tabled in the Constituent Assembly on 7 July, it was criticised from all quarters. Even senior leaders within the ruling coalition objected to its discriminatory provisions and Madhes-based parties burnt and tore copies before walking out of the CA. Outside, civil society members and constitutional experts pointed out gaping holes.

The draft has been criticised on two counts: failing to guarantee an institutionalised federalism in line with the letter and spirit of Interim Constitution, and for its discriminatory provisions pertaining to citizenship rights and representation in a future legislature.

Former parliament speaker Daman Nath Dhungana told me: if you want the new constitution to gain legitimacy and ownership, ensure federal demarcation before promulgation. Dhungana recalls how the parties were forced to amend the Interim Constitution to incorporate federalism after it was torched by the Madhesis and there was an uprising in the plains. "The parties should be mindful that without federal demarcation many sections of the constitution will be dysfunctional which could paralyse governance," he warned.

Recently, President Ram Baran Yadav and Speaker of the House Subhas Nembang have both cautioned top leaders not to



overlook constitutional provisions and comply with the SC verdict while finalising the draft. These developments have renewed hope that a deal on demarcation could be reached before the promulgation of the statute.

Discriminatory citizenship clauses that deny women from conferring equal citizenship rights to their children compared to men has alienated and angered many. If UML leader Bhim Rawal's public justification is anything to go by, Nepal's citizenship debate has been dictated by collective xenophobia of alpha male Bahun leaders presiding over the draft process.

In a tv interview this week, former bureaucrat Surya Nath Upadhyay said Nepal's citizenship woes are inevitably tied to our unregulated border

with India. For too long, women and Madhesis have suffered for the Nepali state's diplomatic failure to negotiate mutually acceptable terms of border management. There is no reason why both countries cannot keep track of people crossing over into their territory, without necessarily hindering their safe movement as provided under Indo-Nepal Friendship treaty.

Going through the draft one also comes to a sobering realisation that the document has provisions designed to institutionalise a centralised governance although in letter and spirit the country will be a federal state. Otherwise, how can one explain draft provision that only guarantees representation of 40 elected members from the federal states in the upper house,

compared to 275 elected at the central level in the lower house?

Also, if representation in the lower house is along demographic lines, why the provision of arbitrary nomination in the case of upper house? Clearly, both provisions have been carefully put in place to benefit the centre's numerical strength in the legislature, compared to federal units. This would have been still justified where the federal units enjoy greater autonomy in local governance. But the draft only seeks to perpetuate centre's everyday hegemony over the federal units, undermining the spirit of local self governance that is centrepiece to federalism. We should not be surprised why Local Self Governance Act failed miserably in this country.

In the next few days, the drafters will head to their constituencies to seek public input and comments on the draft. If exercised in its true spirit, it will help to correct many discrepancies in the draft and accommodate marginalised aspirations, granting legitimacy and ownership to the process.

Nepal has written six constitutions in the last seven decades because the drafters failed to accommodate aspirations of the future generations. Sushil Koirala and his drafting partners have an opportunity to change that. @Anurag\_Acharya



**BY THE WAY**  
Anurag Acharya

passing the draft without broader consensus.

To be sure, the decision to put constitution drafting process on a 'fast-track' was taken at a time when the Sushil Koirala government was still recuperating from the April earthquake. The pressure to raise funds for reconstruction and donors' lack of trust in transitional government forced Koirala to strike a 16-point deal, fully aware that its intent was more to propel KP Oli to Singha Darbar than to expedite statute drafting. The draft postponed federal demarcation, delegating it to a future commission.

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# Losing our young

More than half the students who go abroad for higher studies never come back

The sight of hundreds of mostly young men lining up at Kathmandu Airport's departure immigration reminds us of the country's dire economy that forces so many to migrate for work. But there is another less noticed aspect of migration.



**BETWEEN THE LINES**  
Tsering Dolker Gurung

Walk down Putali Sadak any morning and starting 6AM, there are thousands of young students pouring into the education consultancies that promise students visas to Australia, New Zealand, Canada or Europe. The billboards advertising classes for standardised tests and foreign languages mostly feature Caucasian faces.

Many are fly-by-night outfits charging hefty fees with no guarantee that students get admitted, exploiting the desperation of many Nepali parents to send their children abroad because being a student is the easiest way to obtain a visa to North America, Europe or Australia.



GOPEN RAI

Going abroad to study used to be the nearly exclusive privilege of Kathmandu's well-to-do, today it's turned into just another conduit for out-migration. As per estimates more than 200,000 Nepalis aged 18-24 have left the country in the past 10 years. So far this year the Ministry of Education has received 29,000 applications for 'no objection' letters required for a student visa – double the number for the same period last year. And that does not include students going to

India. Altogether there is an outflow of Rs 30 billion annually to pay for college fees and expenses.

Nepalis are going abroad for higher studies because university education here is so uncertain, but what is worrying is that only less than half of the students return to the country on completion of their studies. That may not necessarily be a bad thing: they get an opportunity, so what?

But like migrant workers to the Gulf, Malaysia and Korea who despite bearing

the brunt of government apathy help contribute 25 per cent of the country's GDP and ultimately return, many of these students are actually migrating for good and many stay on illegally to work in the hope that they can turn their status to permanent residents. The government, instead of upgrading the quality of higher education or create jobs to keep young Nepalis here is just happy that they send money home.

There are the occasional success stories about Nepalis achieving brilliance in their field abroad that makes us all beam a little with pride, but those are few and far in between. It is not different than finally finding a Nepali household help who is treated well by her employer in Lebanon, or the wonderful experience a Nepali worker has in Qatar where he is lucky to have a kind-hearted boss.

A large population of Nepali students going abroad don't always end up living the dream. A boy in his 20s from Kathmandu committed suicide last year after learning that the college he had applied to in UK had been blacklisted. Kathmandu-based consultancies sent 300 students to a college in Malaysia that didn't even have an education license.

And when authorities turn a deaf ear to their pleas, the students use social

media to send out distress calls. When 34 Nepali students who were promised British certificates and a lucrative job at the end of the degree by a college in Mauritius realised they had been duped, the group made an emotional video and posted it on YouTube. "Our money is running out, soon we won't have much to eat. We just want tickets to go home and refund of our fees," said one.

The families of most of these students have sold ancestral property to fund their education, but many quit their studies mid-way because they simply can't keep up with paying tuition working part-time jobs. A greater number of students fund their own education with only few going on full scholarships. And that leads to a domino effect. When they can't continue their studies, they lose their visa status and are left to work illegally.

This is not the picture painted by educational consultancies that dot New Baneswor or Putali Sadak. The posters give the impression students will be on vacation, posing in front of the Sydney Opera House. Like manpower agencies that exploit the desperation of migrant workers, a large number of these institutes take advantage of naïve Nepali boys and girls who see no opportunity here.

A chance to study abroad can turn a student's life around, but only if there is no pressure to make money or worry about not being able to pay bills. Unfortunately that's not the case for a majority of Nepali students leaving the country by the hundreds every day. @Chenreeyang

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- Other qualifications will be considered on case-by-case basis

**Application Deadline: July 25, 2015**

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# Parasitic parastatals

When Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat presented the Annual Performance Review of the Public Enterprises (PEs)-2015 in the Parliament on 12 July and pointed out the staggering loss of state-owned ventures, many in the audience were asking: so what else is new?

The fact that parastatals are making huge losses is no surprise. What is surprising is that they have been allowed to do so for so long. Every year, the people hear it just before the Finance Minister’s budget speech and forget about it for another year. No government has ever tried to reform, privatise or dissolve the loss-making PEs, which have been bleeding the state coffers dry over the last two decades.

In the fiscal year 2014-15, the PEs’ accumulative loss rose to Rs 26.92 billion from the previous year’s Rs 20.61 billion. Only 18 of the total 37 PEs made net profits while 15 incurred losses. The status of 4 PEs was not included in the review report.

Nepal Telecom, Civil Aviation Authority Nepal (CAAN) and some banks continue to make profits. But their achievement has always been eclipsed by huge losses incurred by other PEs. Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) top the list of losers. These two have accumulative losses at Rs 32.84 billion and Rs 17.94 billion respectively. Five other PEs have losses amounting to more than Rs 1 billion each.

When PEs fail to make profits, the government has to provide loans – much of which is never paid back – to help them offset their losses. It could be justifiable to provide loans and subsidies to some loss-making but social service-oriented PEs like the National Food Corporation (NFC). But the government has been spending money from its state coffers to help some commercial PEs like the NOC, too.

The answer to what ails the PEs can be found easily. Experts blame the political leadership for failure of commercially-viable PEs like the NOC. “If political leaders appoint competent people instead of their relatives, party members and henchmen, most PEs will start making profits,” says Bimal Wagle, Chief of Public Enterprises Board (PEB). “But they are not ready to reform PEs despite knowing what is actually needed.”

Wagle says some PEs like the National Trading Limited cannot be reformed from within and need to be either privatised or dissolved. “The situation in which National Trading was set up changed a long time ago, private companies are now selling what it sells,” he says.

“We cannot rescue these PEs without handing them over to the private sector. If privatisation is not possible, they need to be dissolved. But political leaders do not want to go for either option as long as they can milk them.”

*Om Astha Rai*

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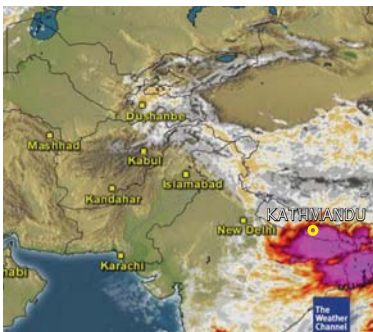
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The southwest monsoon took a short breather there, which was induced by an incursion of a low pressure system from the Arabian Sea that switched prevailing winds back from the west. This pushed back the moisture-rich air from the Bay arm of the monsoon. But at press time the bay of Bengal is reasserting itself and has a slight edge over the Arabian Sea. This see-saw will continue, but expect copious rain mainly falling at night into the weekend. This should make up for the July deficit so far so we can catch up with more normal monthly precipitation total.

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### SONIA AWALE

Those in Nepal watching Serena Williams playing her sister Venus at Wimbledon last week probably didn't know that we have our own tennis sisters – and they are twins!

Born into a family that was active in the All Nepal Lawn Tennis Association Mayanka and Mahika Rana started playing on clay when they were barely six. They haven't looked back since.

“Our parents introduced us to this game and we love it,” said Mahika, the younger twin during a water break from the practice at Satdobato this week.

Over the years the twins have won many age group singles and doubles titles and national championships. In April Mayanka won the Sahabir Memorial Open where she defeated her twin sister in a

tightly fought final match. The 14-year-olds also hold title of national doubles champions.

The sisters are particularly fond of playing together as a doubles team and have accolades to prove their excellence in the court as partners. “I think we play great together, we understand each other well,” says Mayanka. But more often than not they have to play against each other in singles matches when understanding the opponent too well can also be a disadvantage.

“We have played many times against each other. But I'm not as confident while playing with her as when I'm playing against others,” Mahika told us, with a wide grin.

Last year they were selected to represent Nepal in the Asian Games in South Korea. Although they lost in straight sets in the first round, their coach Jitendra Pariyar says there is lot more to be hopeful about them given their age and level of their game.

“They are working hard and the way in

which they are performing, we certainly have positive expectations,” says Pariyar, a national champion himself. “I believe tennis has a great future in Nepal because of how good these junior players are, of course a little more government support would help.”

Tennis is often eclipsed by cricket and football and hasn't gained mass appeal in Nepal. But back in 1984, Sujay Lama was selected in the Junior Wimbledon and ranked 50 in the ITF junior ranking.

“Mayanka and Mahika may be twins but they play mirror opposite games. Mayanka is mentally stronger, prepares brilliantly for matches,” says Pariyar, “Mahika on the other hand executes her shots a lot better and she is physically in better shape.”

The twins' mother, Jyoti Rana beams with pride as she watches her daughters practice at Satdobato. As a former player herself she knows the struggle the girls have to go through. “They are in Grade 10,

and they have to study and practice,” she adds.

The twins are next headed to matches in Sri Lanka and Singapore. Says Mayanka: “I want to play like Federer one day.” To which Mahika quips: “I want to play in the grandslams.”

With their goals set so high, we may as well start getting used to the names Mayanka and Mahika from Nepal in the international tennis circuit in a few years.

nepalitimes.com

■ Watch the Rana sisters on court

TENNIS TWINS

Mahika and Mayanka Rana: you heard those names here first

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HONDA

EVENTS



Run Nagarkot,

A fun 18km charity run to raise funds for rebuilding of quake-damaged Baluwapati Secondary School in Kavre. Route will go from Nagarkot to Dhulikhel.  
Rs 600 for Nepalis and Rs 800 for foreigners, 1 August, 7am to 11am, Nagarkot, 9851192617, for registration [www.ultra trailkathmandu.com](http://www.ultra trailkathmandu.com)

Lato Mato,

Set in eastern Nepal, *Lato Mato* is a tale of four porters and their struggle to make ends meet.  
Directed by Kiran Chamling Rai and adapted by Yuvraj Ghimire.  
16 July to 3 August, 5.15pm, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, (01)4469621, [shilpeeetheatre@gmail.com](mailto:shilpeeetheatre@gmail.com), [www.shilpee.org](http://www.shilpee.org)

Dream vision,

Share articles, poems, photographs, videos on the theme "How can we organise progress in Nepal?" Best

submissions will receive cash prizes.  
Deadline 20 July, 12pm, [natalia@edgeryders.eu](mailto:natalia@edgeryders.eu), [matthias@edgeryders.eu](mailto:matthias@edgeryders.eu), [www.edgeryders.eu](http://www.edgeryders.eu)

Think and talk,

Suresh Poudel, a doctoral student from the University of Tennessee will speak on Proteomics Data Analysis.  
24 July, 3pm to 5pm, Kantipur Valley College, Kumaripati, [info@talkbiotech.org](mailto:info@talkbiotech.org), [www.talkbiotech.org](http://www.talkbiotech.org)



Kids yoga,

Yoga workshop for children aged seven and above with a certified Sivananda yoga teacher.  
Rs 1000, 18 July, 10.30am to 12.30pm, Pranamaya Studio, Jhamsikhel, [www.pranamaya-yoga.com](http://www.pranamaya-yoga.com)



Nakhipot Urban XC,

A 4.35km trail race around Nakhipot, open to all.  
Registration deadline: 1 August, Event : 8 August, 7am, Nakhipot, 98020915 95, 9803661496



Kathmandu Kora,

Join hundreds of cycling enthusiasts and ride for 50, 75, or 100 km to raise money for a birthing centre in Pyutar, Lalitpur.  
18 July, 6.45am to 4.45pm, [ride@kathmandukora.net](mailto:ride@kathmandukora.net), [www.kathmandukora.net](http://www.kathmandukora.net)

Critical mass,

A monthly meet up of cyclists who go on a ride, their purpose: reclaim the streets.  
31 July, 5.30PM, Basantapur Darbar Square



Heritage poetry,

Poetry reading by Abhay K, music by Jason Kunwar and Deependra Bajracharya's photographs on exhibit.  
17 July, 5.30pm, Theatre Village, Uttar Dhoka, (01)4001089, 9851038782

MUSIC



Himalayan Glory,

Ready to bang some heads? UgraKarma, Plague Throat, Binaash, Kaal and Vomiting Snake live under one roof.  
25 July, 12pm to 6pm, Purple Haze, Thamel



Monsoon Dhoon,

A musical fundraiser featuring Vairabi to help raise fund for treatment of cancer patient Rasma Maharjan.  
Rs 200, Rs 500, 17 July, 5pm to 7.30pm, Nepa Banquet, 9841155194

Plebeian Live,

Feel the groove with the Nep-Indie band Plebeian.  
24 July, 7.30pm, Irish Pub, Lajimpat, (01)4416027



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# Saving what is left

Just a few pages into *Down History's Narrow Lanes* a sense of melancholy sets in, a feeling of loss wells up. Turning a page, we find that Desmond Doig's exquisite line drawing of iconic Kasthamandap (right) is in the past tense.

Doig painted and drew a Kathmandu Valley he loved to accompany text researched by Dubby Bhagat about the temples and shrines that were slowly being blotted by urbanisation. Now they lie largely in ruins after the April earthquake. Doig died in 1983, but left his sketches as a testament to the value of our civilisation in two books, *Down History's Narrow Lanes* and the larger coffee table edition, *My Kind of Kathmandu*.

But what earthquake couldn't take from us are our heritage, festivals, and way of life. What it couldn't shake is our faith. Doig was a renaissance man, and understood Nepal better than most Nepalis know themselves and their culture.

Thirty years ago, he wrote: 'Every monument in Kathmandu has a myth, every temple tells a tale.' The Valley people still derive their rituals and festivals from them and their lives are irrevocably connected to them. The temples are just symbols, they may have come down, but the Gods in it are safe.

The Machhindranath festival would have been in full swing at this time of the year, but the chariot is still in Chyasikot, exactly where



## REVIEW

15 YEARS

it came to a halt on 25 April. Popular myths of doom and destruction have always surrounded Machhindranath if the journey is disrupted for any reason. In the chapter 'The Jewelled Gift of a Snake God' Doig and Bhagat take us on a journey to discover the myth of Machhindranath, the story of the fabled *bhoto*, and how a deity from Assam came to be associated with life-giving rain.

For many Nepalis, Dharara was a

monument that represented Kathmandu. When it came down, killing at least 60 people, the symbol vanished. There were stories of tragic, chance deaths and also tales of miraculous survivals. Doig tells us in the chapter 'Where the Serpents Breathe Fire' that Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa originally built two towers to serve as gates to his palace and as military lookouts. They came down in the 1833 quake, and only

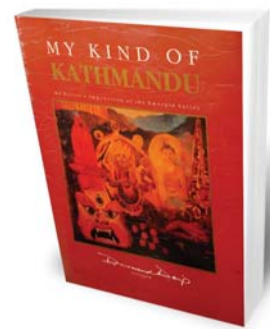
one was rebuilt, which was also destroyed in 1934.

*Down History's Narrow Lanes* takes us back to old Kathmandu with Doig's quintessential drawings of the Valley's temples and monuments, and the tales that will spellbind readers. The fall of many of these monuments in the earthquake truly give us a feeling of emptiness.

But not everything is lost. Bhaktapur, described as 'The City Vishnu May Have Built' is still magical in its unique charm despite the destruction in April. Of all the ancient cities of the Kathmandu Valley, Bhaktapur is the least changed despite the Valley's unplanned growth. Nyatapola, built in 1702, withstood many earthquakes including the latest.

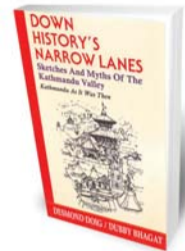
The golden temple of Patan and the house of the Living Goddess in Kathmandu, both featured and sketched in the books, are intact, as are the stupas of Swayambhu and Boudha (albeit in scaffolding) with the Buddha's eyes still piercing one's soul.

*Down History's Narrow Lanes* and *My Kind of Kathmandu* transport us to the alleyways of Newar Kathmandu filled with ancient houses with intricate wooden carvings, farmers carrying fresh vegetables, traders selling ghee and oil in their clay pots and people walking down the streets in traditional *haku patasi* and *daura suruwal*. That Kathmandu is still there, despite the traffic and noise. The books tell us about the shrines we pass by every day, their tales and our beliefs, and teach us to treasure even more what is left. It reminds us that we are blessed with art, culture and history and we have it within us to rebuild ourselves what is ours.



### My Kind of Kathmandu

An artist's impression of an emerald valley  
By Desmond Doig and Dubby Bhagat  
Harper Collins India 1994



### Down History's Narrow Lanes

Sketches and myths of the Kathmandu valley, Kathmandu as it was then  
By Desmond Doig and Dubby Bhagat  
Harper and Row, 246 Pages, 2009

First published in 1999 and reprinted in 2009, both books now, more than ever before, should be an important part of everyone's personal library for a chapter-by-chapter guide to explore Kathmandu Valley. 🇳🇵

Sonia Awale

*Desmond Doig spent much of his life in Nepal. Dubby Bhagat lives in Kathmandu. Nepali Times carried weekly installments of Doig's book from 2000-2005.*



The owners of the newly opened Otafuku Okonomiyaki touted as the first Japanese fast food joint in Kathmandu had one goal: to make diners feel like they are eating in Tokyo. And that's the feeling you get observing this neat looking cafe from outside.

Kakemonos or Japanese scroll paintings decorate the exterior, there's an open kitchen, and orders have to be placed on a ticket machine. Even the fans are Japanese. While we were feeling very much in the land of the rising sun, our hopes took a dip once we opened the menu.

Only eight of the 40 or so dishes were Japanese specialties. The rest were a mish-mash of the usual affairs served at non-Japanese fast food joints. Nonetheless we took it in our stride and ordered as much Japanese as we could.

We started with the Veg Okonomiyaki

## Otafuku Okonomiyaki



PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT

OPEN FROM  
10AM  
TO  
10PM

(Rs 300) curious to try a dish we had never before seen on any of the menus in Japanese restaurants here.

This Japanese pancake takes its name from the words 'okonomi', meaning 'what you want', and 'yaki' meaning 'grilled'. Otafuku Okonomiyaki's cook has well understood this concept. The pancake mixed with cabbage had an interesting Nepali flavour due to addition of paneer and spices. The sauce on top gave it

a savory taste. The noodles we felt were a bit unnecessary as the Veg Okonomiyaki is already satiating with its two pancakes sandwiching the stuffing. The dish can be easily shared between two people but if you are a hearty eater, it won't take you long to finish it off.

Our second dish was the Tamagodon (Rs 285) which is a rice bowl with a fried-egg and a miso soup. The egg was creamy and perfectly cooked. But we felt the dish could have done with a little less dashing of soya sauce which made it too salty. Even the miso soup was a tad salty.

For the meat dish, we tried the Katsudon (Rs 325). It is basically the same as Tamagodon but with slices of fried pork on top. The dish was rightly seasoned, the pork well cooked and very tasty.

If refined Japanese cuisine is what you are looking for, then Otafuku Okonomiyaki is definitely not for you. But if you like to indulge in Japanese that bends a little more towards Chinese, then do step in.

It's an unpretentious restaurant, serving meals at great prices. The service is quick and if after a meal here you feel inspired to try cooking Japanese yourself there's also a range of Otafuku products to be bought. 🇳🇵

Stéphane Huët

*How to get there: Otafuku Okonomiyaki is located on the Sanepa slope next to Hotel Summit.*



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**DELHI SHUTTLE:** UCPN(M) Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal (centre) interacts with media before leaving on a four-day visit to India on Tuesday.



**BUDGET WATCH:** Shopkeepers at Nakhipot in Lalitpur watch the live broadcast of the budget speech in parliament by Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat on Tuesday.



**CHANGE MAKERS:** Room to Read founder John Woods (left) with Anil Chitrakar at a program to discuss his new book *A Path Appears* at Hotel Himalaya on Monday.



**QUAKE RELIEF:** Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai hands over relief to a quake survivor at a program organised by local NGO Raksha Nepal on Sunday.



**WHEEL OF LIFE:** Visitors wait for their turn to ride the ferris wheel at the Kathmandu Valley Fun Park at Bhrikuti Mandap on Saturday.



# The Woman in Gold

Occasionally Hollywood will churn out an imperfect film that is still utterly captivating. *The Woman in Gold* is one of those odd little films that could so easily have tended towards formulaic banality had it not been for the focused talents of its two main characters.



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

Based on the real life story of Maria Altmann, played by the wonderful Helen Mirren, the film deals with the epic case of Altmann's fight against the Austrian government to retrieve enormously valuable paintings that had belonged to her family, a wealthy, immensely sophisticated Jewish industrialists living in Vienna, who lost everything they owned due to the advent of Nazi influence in Austria. Ostracised and impoverished, Altmann (née Bloch-Bauer, Adele was her aunt by marriage) leaves Austria behind with her husband for the United States determined to begin anew.

It is only years later, with the help of Randol/Randy Schoenberg (Ryan Reynolds) a lawyer son of another Austrian-Jewish friend, that she begins a decade long struggle to regain ownership of her family's lost property.

The case of the 'Adele Bloch-Bauer' (or 'The Woman in Gold' as it came to be known) painting was a historic one for many reasons. After the war, the Klimt paintings commissioned by the Bloch-Bauer family were displayed at the famous Belvedere House in Vienna, quickly becoming synonymous with Austrian

culture. As a result, in addition to complex legalities, the Austrian government was also extremely reluctant to concede the moral and ethical issues linked to the public absorption of paintings seized during the holocaust, aware that returning the Klimt paintings to Altmann could set a precedent for hundreds of such claims in the future.

While the legalities involved are fascinating, the film's strength is in the wonderful and heartbreaking recreation of the Bloch-Bauer family's lives in pre-war Vienna, their privilege, their bewilderment at being victimised after having been integral in influential society solely due to their belonging to the Jewish faith.

Both Mirren and Reynolds shine in their roles as they battle both the legal system, and sometimes each other, clinging to the case that is so closely linked to the past of both families (Schoenberg's grandfather was the famous Austrian composer and painter).

For those who followed the case in real time, you will know that Adele Bloch-Bauer's portrait now resides in New York in the Neue Galerie, bought by the Lauder family for an astonishing \$135 million and put on permanent display at the request of Maria Altmann - a shimmering pleasure for all to see, and an incredibly symbolic victory for the Jewish people who lost so much during the war. While this film sometimes descends into self-indulgent sentimentality, the gravity of the situation and the history it seeks to portray makes it essential viewing.

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
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# MYSTICAL MUSTANG in the MONSOON

Tourist guesthouses in Upper Mustang are intact, but empty

**STÉPHANE HUËT**  
in MUSTANG

This time last year, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) had issued nearly 1,700 permits for Upper Mustang for the trekking season. This year, it is only 667. Although it did not suffer any damage in the 25 April earthquake the economy of this rugged and remote trans-Himalayan region has been hit hard by the fall in tourism.

Only less than half the seats on a recent Pokhara-Jomsom flight were occupied. The only other visitors on a recent trek was a French couple, Camille Niguin and Thomas Peverelli, at a guest house in Dhee.

“We had been planning a Mustang trip for over a year and didn’t feel there was any reason to be afraid or cancel,” said Niquin. “Two months have passed since the earthquake and the infrastructure here is just fine.”

The couple were told by many locals they were the first trekkers to visit the region after the earthquake. The two are next headed to Dolpo on a 20-day trek. “The best way to help Nepal is to visit and consume local goods,” said Peverelli.

While the French couple downplayed the fear of a bigger earthquake coming there are locals who are still worried.

“We understand why tourists wouldn’t want to come at this time, even we are scared,” said



Kunga Gurung, a guesthouse owner in Ghiling who still sleeps in a tent even though no house in the village was damaged.

In Lo Manthang, however, the royal palace is damaged and closed to visitors. Both the king

and queen of Mustang are now in Kathmandu. Shops here are deserted, but dejected traders keep them open hoping customers will show up.

The Mystique Himalayan Hotel in Lo Manthang has received only


10 guests this year. Manager Ram Bahadur Gurung says last year he got ten times more tourists. “We had a lot of bookings for this season, but they were all cancelled after 25 April,” he said.

The mood is even gloomier in

Dhakmar, famous for its red cliffs, where all hotels are closed and the owners have moved down to Pokhara.

Some here say trekkers could be attracted if the government removed or reduced the \$500






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# Head in the clouds

The steep stairs that lead up and up towards the Annapurna Base Camp are in near pristine condition. The guest houses are all intact. There's little sign of damage from the earthquakes on the trek from Ghandruk to Poon Hill.

After climbing above 3,000m you leave the leeches behind, and hours of trekking are punctuated only by the smiles of local children Namaste-ing from the verandahs of guest houses owned by their families. For Rs100 you can enjoy warm tea and dry out your raincoat and boots by a fireplace before you head off again up the mountain.

On the first day, after a lunch break in Ghandruk you head through thick rhododendron and oak forests to the Panorama Point Lodge in Tadapani. The late afternoons bring rainstorms

that are shielded by the canopy above. Everything is green, wet and dripping.

At the guest house, the weary walker is greeted with hot tea, steaming goat meat, and a warm dose of the local fermented millet spirit. Panorama Point Lodge sports breathtaking views on clear days, but during the monsoon it is only fleeting morning glimpses

through the rising mist of the fluted double summit of Machhapuchhre.

The next day's walk is an easy ridge trail through cloud-shrouded Deurali Pass to Ghorepani. Although some structures near the Ghorepani entrance gate have cracks, this town and all others along the Annapurna Trail have not suffered any damage at all in the earthquakes. Still, the fall in tourist numbers and the monsoon means that trekkers find themselves walking all by themselves these days.

Ghorepani has plenty of places to sleep, eat, and even buy books. It would be a good idea to linger here, and just relax for a few days doing short day hikes to Poon Hill or Mohare Danda for spectacular sunrise views of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna South if you are lucky.

It is surprising how, even in the rainy season, the snow peaks are visible and are all the more stunning because they make their appearances so briefly. If you want the trekking trails of the Himalaya all to yourself, now is the time to head up the Ghorepani Trail.

*Peregrine Frissell*



ALL PICS: STÉPHANE HUÉT

## SOLITUDE IN MUSTANG:

(Clockwise from top) A lone trekker walking past the spectacular red cliffs of Dhakmar.

Lo Manthang's shops are all boarded up.

Guide Rupak Roka in Kagbeni with just one trekker.

A stream near Ghami.

Dhakmar's cliffs catch the late afternoon light.



**VIEWPOINT:** The tower in Poon Hill which is usually packed with trekkers watching the sun rise over Dhaulagiri is deserted. A poster shows the view if there were no clouds.

ACAP fee to enter this restricted area.

ACAP's Narendra Lama, however, is skeptical that the government will agree to reducing the fee to \$100 as proposed by the Tourism Recovery Committee in

Pokhara.

Rupak Roka, a local guide, put it in characteristically simple words: "Tourists should come now, they can have Mustang to themselves, and it is safe. This is the time to visit." 🇳🇵



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# Beautiful at any Age

# Back-stopping rescue

Within hours of the earthquake on 25 April, relief flights from overseas started arriving at Kathmandu Airport. Helicopters from India, the US, and China joined others from the Nepal Army and private operators in a major airlift to reach remote villages to pick up the injured and stranded, and drop off relief supplies and medical teams.

In the first days after the earthquake some rescue and relief flights were finding it difficult to locate their destination in the 15 affected districts as they flew in unfamiliar terrain, or had to turn back because of bad weather. On 30 April within three hours of receiving a call from the Home Ministry, a team of atmospheric scientists from ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) set up a temporary office at the Nepal Army hangar at Kathmandu Airport, and worked there from dawn to dusk until 28 May, helping helicopter pilots in their rescue and relief flights.

The pilots needed GPS coordinates of their destination, which they had earlier tried to compute off paper maps using rulers. The ICIMOD team brought in Google Earth on big screens, helped find drop off points in remote locations, identified and evaluated landing sites for different helicopters, mapped potential flight paths, and

ICIMOD's behind-the-scenes help with location and weather information was critical in increasing the reliability of earthquake rescue and relief flights



ARNICO PANDAY / ICIMOD



SUBASANA SHRESTHA / ICIMOD

provided elevation information to calculate load limits. The pilots were provided colour printouts of customised maps showing 3-D terrain images of their routes and destinations with GPS coordinates and elevations marked.

Indian Air Force Wing

Commander Shiv Shankaram who flew in MI17s from Gorakhpur said elevation accuracy was very important in flying in the mountainous terrain. Since altitude affects the efficiency of helicopters, pilots need to know what height they will be flying in order to plan their load for delivery and pickup. He also said that the aerial maps they had been using to navigate over large distances were not detailed enough, making it difficult to assess altitude accurately and therefore the images provided by the team were of great help to them in relating to the nearby hills and rivers to locate villages accurately.

**MULTINATIONAL CHOPPERS:** MI17 helicopters of the Indian and Chinese Air forces (*left, foreground*) and Nepal Army (hovering) at Kathmandu Airport at the height of the earthquake rescue missions in early May.

Arnico Pandey of ICIMOD carrying out a pre-flight briefing for a Nepal Army officer about a drop off point using Google Earth in a coordination centre at Kathmandu Airport.

With the ICIMOD team assisting in flight dispatch and operations, flight times were significantly reduced and reliability in reaching destinations increased. As a result, the total number of successful rescue and relief flights per helicopter per day went up, totalling some 2,751 sorties during ICIMOD's service period.

"Right after the main shock ICIMOD appeared at the airport to help our relief flight movement. They were a blessing from the god," said Col Dipak Karki, who was in charge of dispatching the helicopters.

After more than three weeks of continuous emergency service at the airport, and once the number of helicopter flights per day slowed down sufficiently, ICIMOD experts initiated a phase-out plan, sharing data and files, and teaching Nepal Army officials how to use the online tools. 🇳🇵

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# Told you so

**T**ragic and destructive as the 25 April earthquake was, it wasn't a surprise. Everyone knew it was coming. But question is whether the Nepal government heeded the warnings and the advice it had received. Would this have reduced the death toll, injuries and damage and possibly reduced the misery of thousands of families still living in shelters



## GUEST COLUMN

Gyan Jung Thapa

in the rain? As with all disasters, it was the poorest segment of society that bore the brunt of the consequences. Survivors initially went without food and shelter, and many are still at the mercy of the elements.

It was back in 2001 that the UN's Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project started preparations to upgrade the capability of the government and people to the expected Big One. Back then we estimated that if a 1934 Great Earthquake were to be repeated, there would be 40,000 deaths and 95,000 injured. More than 60 per cent of the existing buildings would be destroyed, many beyond repair, leaving 600,000 to 900,000 residents homeless. In Bhaktapur alone, more than 75 per cent of the residences would be heavily damaged. Half of the bridges and many narrow roads in the valley could be blocked to rescue vehicles because of debris.

Even though the liquefaction susceptibility was deemed to be very low

An impartial review is needed to find out if the death toll in the earthquake could have been reduced by implementing past disaster preparedness plans



BIKRAM RAI

around Tribhuvan International Airport, the runway was expected to buckle and the airport to become unserviceable, isolating Kathmandu from the rest of the world. Blocked highways and destroyed bridges would further cut the capital off.

A JICA team conducted a detailed study in 2000 of three fault models and calculated the destructive force of future earthquakes. For comparison, a fourth scenario looked at the damage if a 8.4 magnitude 1934 quake were to be repeated. The report said such a quake would result in 19,523 deaths and 136,474 damaged buildings because it downscaled the potential of liquefaction in Kathmandu Valley.

Even so, a month later, the UN issued a Disaster Response Preparedness Plan which stated:

- 1 'No-one questions that earthquakes are an unavoidable part of Nepal's

future and many earthquake experts from all over the world believe a major earthquake is likely to occur in the near future. It is thus considered serious enough to warrant active and continuous readiness.'

- 2 'Since emergency preparedness is much more effective and efficient than disaster response, UN Nepal gives the highest priority to developing and implementing action plans/projects which will support measures for vulnerability reduction and to capacity building, such as the preparation of this disaster response preparedness plan.'

The recommendations in the UN Plan followed the widely accepted principle that in any disaster-prone country,



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emergency preparedness is a precondition for sustainable development. Whereas emergency preparedness focuses on various measures before a disaster happens, such as vulnerability reduction and capacity building, disaster response focuses on the rescue and relief operation after the occurrence of a disaster. The primary focus of the UN plan was on natural hazards in general and on earthquakes in particular. It was recognised that only systematic emergency preparedness efforts and an institutionalised disaster management system could mitigate the effects of a devastating earthquake in Nepal.

Although the 25 April earthquake was of a much lower intensity than 1934, it still demands answers as to whether the government paid any heed to any of the recommendations it received over the years. If not, why? And where was the drag preventing it from preparing the nation for a disaster that everyone said was inevitable? An impartial and transparent review is also required to assess if the death toll, injuries and damage to the infrastructure would have been significantly reduced if the recommendations had been diligently implemented.

Such a review would prepare Nepal for the real Big One that seismologists say is still pending, and make viable recommendations. The risk of a major earthquake with

frightening humanitarian implications is so high that this country needs to maintain efficient emergency preparedness and standing readiness. The least the government can do is to preposition stocks of food, water, shelter, medicines, fuel as well as earthmoving and lifting equipments with adequate reserves of food in all population centres and along vital highways and airfields. 🇳🇵

*Gyan Jung Thapa is an ex-Nepal Army colonel and served with the United Nations in Nepal, Gaza and Darfur.*

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# Departure of a South Asian

Indian journalist and activist Praful Bidwai will be missed

**BEENA SARWAR**

‘The funeral for Praful Bidwai is scheduled for the 27th June 2015.’ That blunt email announcement on 25 June came as a shock.

How does one come to grips with the fact that this low-key but vital journalist, scholar and activist, one of India’s finest writers and columnists, a true humanist, secularist, and peacenik, is no more? Perhaps by remembering that the only thing certain in life is death.

Bidwai had worked with the *Times of India* where he was a Senior Assistant Editor before embarking on a prolific freelance career with a long association with the wire service Inter Press Service (IPS).

Besides being a journalist, Bidwai was a scholar with solid academic credentials. He was a Professorial Fellow at the Centre for Social Development, New Delhi, and a Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. He had served as a member of the Indian Council for Social Science Research, the Central Advisory Board on Education, and the National Book Trust.

His books included *An India That Can Say Yes: A Climate-Responsible Development Agenda for Copenhagen and Beyond* (Heinrich Boell Foundation, New Delhi, 2009) and the critically acclaimed *New Nukes – India, Pakistan and Global Nuclear Disarmament*, co-authored with Achin Vanaik (Interlink, 1999). In 2000, the International Peace Bureau awarded Bidwai and Vanaik the Sean McBride International Peace Prize in recognition of their work opposing nuclear weapons development in South Asia.

As an activist, Bidwai was one of the founders of the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament (MIND), a member of the International Network of Engineers and Scientists against Proliferation, and one of the leaders of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace, India, set up after India’s nuclear tests in 1998.

Bidwai was busy writer in the causes he took up. His syndicated columns were published in over 20 news outlets around the globe. The subjects he took up ranged from climate change, to nuclear (non) proliferation, and human rights



issues such as discrimination against Muslims and Dalits in India.

In a recent piece, he invoked the civil liberties movement of the United States that as he pointed out ‘had to wage a prolonged and bitter struggle to achieve de-segregation’. Along the same lines, he argued for an anti-discrimination law to stop the ghettoisation and the growing Hindu-Muslim segregation in Indian cities. He urged the launch of a special initiative by civil liberties groups, and conscientious

citizens ‘cutting across religion, to file criminal complaints’ against companies that openly discriminated.

They should also, he argued, ‘petition the Supreme Court to seek clarification that the spirit of the Constitution’s anti-discrimination and equal-treatment-of-citizens articles applies to non-state institutions too. That will help prepare the ground for the legislation India sorely needs’.

There is little doubt that he would have been at the forefront

of such a movement, supporting it through his talks and writings and providing guidance where needed. His advice would also benefit activists in other South Asian countries, including Pakistan, where discrimination against one or other community regularly takes place.

Karachi-based activist Karamat Ali who travelled to Delhi for Praful’s memorial remembrance held on 8 July says: “We must remember him for his tremendous contributions towards peace and friendship between India and Pakistan and the people of South Asia.”

A true nationalist — not the flag-waving kind but someone who sincerely loved India and wanted to see her people prosper and be treated with respect and justice — Praful Bidwai was a flag-bearer of the anti-nuclear and anti-communal, leftist movements at home and abroad. He stood for human rights for all, regardless of nationality, gender, religion, caste or sect. Praful Bidwai’s departure is not just India’s loss, but a loss for secularists and humanists everywhere. 🇮🇳

(A version of this article first appeared in *The News on Sunday, Lahore.*)



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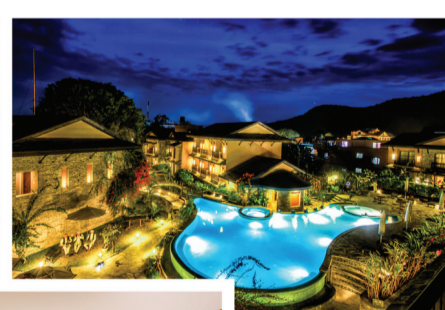
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# A little cup of self love




Many women grow up wishing their waists were narrower, their eyes bigger, their legs longer-wishing they were someone else

When you suddenly gain a lot of weight, your life changes and so did mine. I went from 48 kgs to 72 kgs in just three months. Right now, it's not about how I let it happen but what I learned in the process. One important lesson was how differently people treat you. Sometimes you are in a room full of people and feel invisible because no one wants to be seen next to you or talk to you. I had people tell me what my 'fat' nickname was. They thought it was funny, I didn't.



**ASK ANJANA ANYTHING**  
Anjana Rajbhandary

Very few people are aware of how often I cried in my room because I was embarrassed of myself. Many associated my weight gain to an eating disorder, western influence, insecurity. I got the guidance I needed eventually, but it took me years. It's necessary for young women to have positive role models who can help them prioritise what is important, such as intelligence and kindness -- not the size of their jeans. It's unfortunate that in a majority of women food generates guilt and they cannot look in the mirror without first finding fault in their appearance, something that I am still guilty of at times. Many women grow up wishing their waists were narrower, their eyes bigger, their legs longer- pretty much wishing they were someone else. We feel we are either too fat or too thin, but never just right. Body shaming and stereotypical

prototype of a body size promoted in media can do a lot of damage to one's self esteem and we need to teach our daughters, sisters and nieces to have a positive outlook about themselves from a young age. We need to teach them to focus on having a healthier attitude, not a lower weight. Self love comes from self acceptance. Looking at the grand scheme of things, this problem is very negligible but as women we have a tendency to let it consume our lives. I know I did, fluctuating almost 30 kilos is not a tiny nudge. Through tears and sweat, every stretch mark I have tells a story of the struggle, the pain and the victory, but is a constant reminder of my uphill battle between my body image and the perception of society. It took me decades to love myself. This came with a bonus of letting go of unnecessary pride, hatred, and envy. Many societies prioritise physical beauty as a barometer for being accepted, which is a sad and skewed view on life. The truth is no matter how much you change or do not change, there will always be people who will find fault in you but there will also be people who will always love you -- and it's a waste of time trying to figure out why either group feels the way they do. For me, the definition of beautiful is a kind heart, a smart mind, pure soul and a strong drive. True beauty comes from within and more people need to realise that. The people who matter will support you, literally, though thick or thin. Don't bend over backwards to fit the unrealistic archetype of what a woman should look like. I changed to be healthy, not to fit in. I am honest and I do not bow down to society's standards, and never will. This is my body and my life, and I do not allow anyone to belittle me for who I am.  @AnjyRajy

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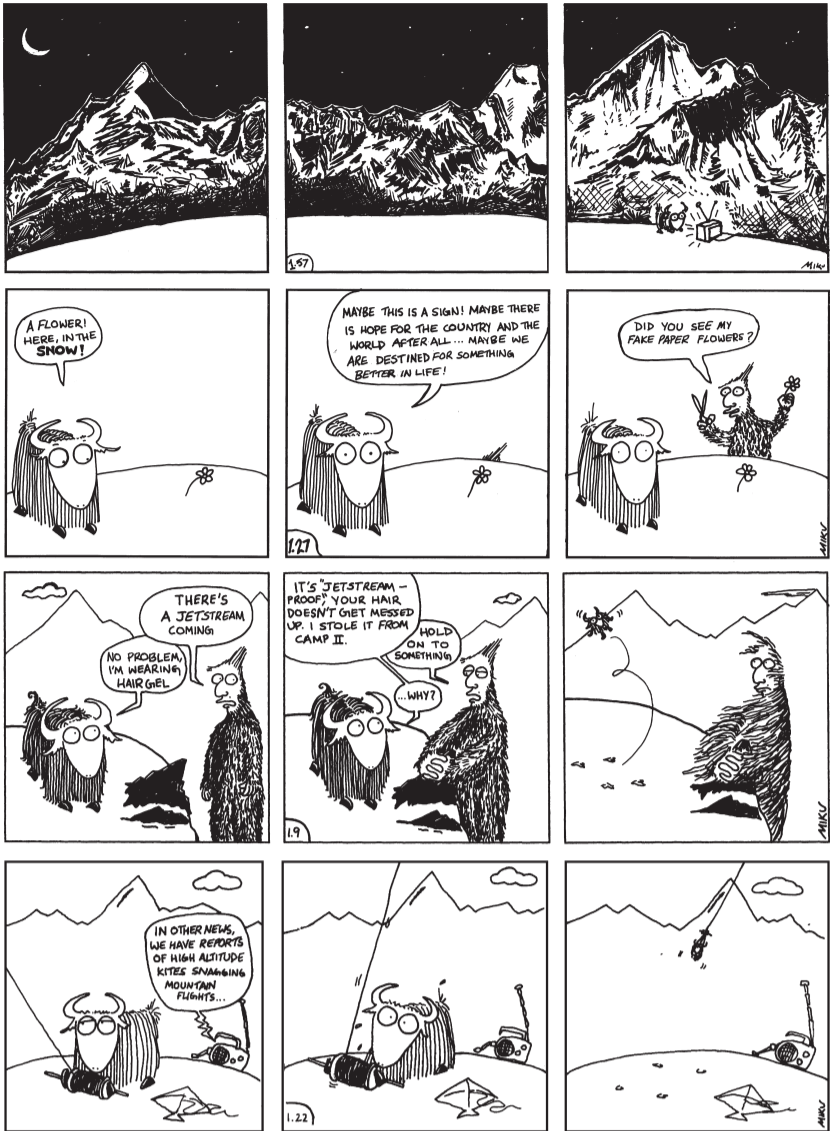
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# Yak yetiyak

Between 2001-2002, *Nepali Times* carried the Yak yetiyak cartoon strip by Miku every week. The two characters in the strip are an existential Yeti and a talkative Yak who bounce jokes off one another, subtly exposing society's hypocrisies and human idiosyncrasies.

Yak yetiyak had a cult following among readers of the newspaper who sought comic relief in its self-deprecating satire as Nepal was mired in deeper crisis.

 [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

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# 15 YEARS



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Better plane

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This is an upgraded model of the de Havilland aircraft which is manufactured by Canada's Viking. The plane will service remote area STOL airfields.

Burst of flavours

Dabur Nepal has launched two new variants under Real Burrst fruit juice. The new apple and litchi flavour comes in 200ml packs and is priced at Rs 23.



German tech



Soaltee Crowne Plaza in Kathmandu hosted the launch of Buzil Rossario- a German jointventure that produces cleaning solutions, disinfectants, and fabric care and food safety products.

Youth heroes

Jagadamba Steels as part of its CSR campaign 'Nepal is Steel Strong' has announced the 'Nepali Yuva Ratna' award which will be given to a young Nepali who made outstanding contribution to the society in the aftermath of the earthquake. Nominations can be sent to the official page of Jagadamba Steels until 26 July.



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# Toon times

15 YEARS

From its very first issue in July 2000, *Nepali Times* has been translating relevant reports, op-eds, editorials, radio programs and interviews from the Nepali language press and social web. We reprint below some of the more memorable cartoons from the last 15 years.

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)  
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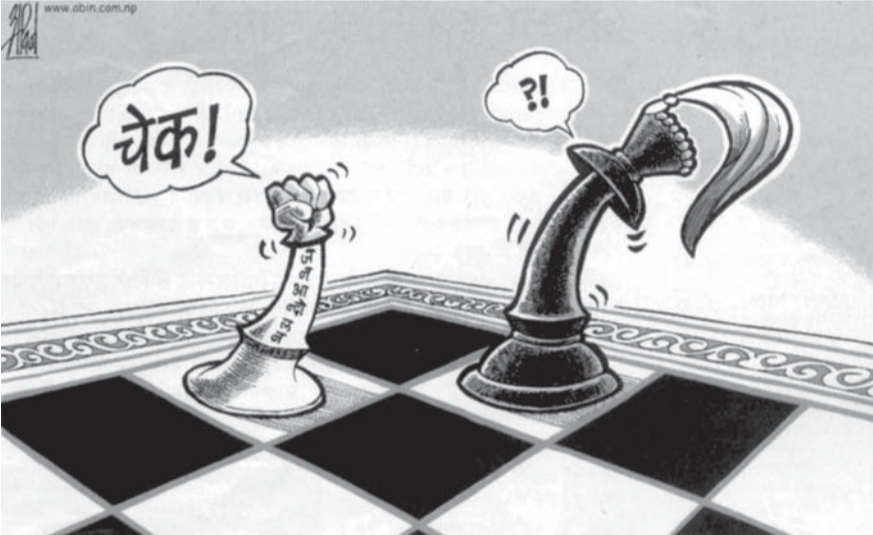
"Parara..." Now in English: "Rat-tat-tat..."  
Sushil in *Drishhti*, 19 July 2001



Rabin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-17 Sep 2002



**Sack:** Rehabilitation Package  
**Road sign:** Peace and reconciliation  
Deven in *Nagarik*, 7 December 2011



"Check."  
Abin Shrestha in *Samay*, 27 April 2006



**Sign:** Chief Editor (In)  
Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 4 June 2005



"There go the leaders, flying to their constituency for public consultation about the draft constitution."  
**Sign:** Nepal Airlines flight Kathmandu - Delhi  
Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 12 July

## Happy 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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Two translations from the Nepali press that appeared in *Nepali Times*, including this one from *Jana Astha* that was printed in the edition on the morning of the royal massacre on Friday 1 June, 2001.

[nepalitimes.com](#)

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A suitable prince

Jana Astha, 28 May 2001

आस्था

Preparations are underway to celebrate the 31st birthday of the heir to Nepal's throne, Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. With this royal birthday around the corner, people's attention is focused on the crown prince. People are asking why the crown prince is unmarried at this age, and whether his future as the heir to throne is in danger.

This is not an uncommon worry for the Nepali people, who have a lot of faith in and respect for the royal family. Crown Prince Dipendra is perhaps the first member of the Nepali royalty to break tradition and not be married even at 31. The Royal Palace is also concerned about the Crown Prince's marriage. But many do not know where the crown prince's heart lies.

People close to the crown prince speak of two women he has an emotional relationship with. According to them, one is a childhood sweetheart, while his relationship with the other began when he was older. "It might be that the crown prince is finding it difficult to choose between the two," jokes a palace employee, adding, "But he does not support bigamy."

Crown Prince Dipendra has a romantic nature, and he loves to joke around and be open. His professors say he is uninhibited and has the poetic talents of his grandfather, the late King Mahendra, although his poems have not been published yet. Some people say the crown prince is against parliamentary democracy, but in reality he supports it wholeheartedly. He wants the Nepali people to have social discipline and responsibility.

The crown prince is also very studious, his favourite subject being Nepal's geography. He does not read a lot of fiction but devours non-fiction. He also painstakingly reads all the major newspapers. Crown Prince Dipendra also engages in discussions about how to boost the nation's economy. He often quotes slokas from the Gita during discussions, but has a vision for the future.

The crown prince usually likes to dress in informal and colourful clothes. His favourite is a brown daura-suruwal, says a source close to him. The crown prince is very conscious of the Nepali dhaka topi and if he particularly likes one, will wear it until the colours fade. Crown Prince Dipendra's most gentlemanly quality is that he never leaves if someone is speaking to him, even though he is often constrained for time. Although he is very interested in matters of governance and state administration, he does not wish to see the monarchy heading the politics of the country. He maintains his stand that the monarchy must play a major role in social development. The enthusiasm he displayed in the SAF Games is proof of his belief.

Another professor close to the Crown

Prince says Dipendra views his grandfather, the late King Mahendra as a "communist with a crown". He does not believe any of the communist parties are real communists, except the extreme leftists. The crown prince likes to talk with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and admires his wisdom and ability to be light-hearted. His relationship with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is, however, just cordial. Crown Prince Dipendra turns 31 on 27 June. It is high time His Royal Highness got married. The Nepali people wish to celebrate his marriage soon and in the grandest manner. Everyone is worrying about when this will happen.

#45

An emerging Nepal

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 9 November 2006

कान्तिपुर

The agreement on the political roadmap between the seven party alliance and the Maoists reached at midnight on Tuesday in Baluwatar has given Nepal a historic opportunity to take the country towards a modern democracy.

At surface level, this agreement is only a political roadmap to steer Nepal towards a constituent assembly election but it is a constituent assembly

that will decide Nepal's future. Then an emerging Nepal will depend on the victorious representatives of the people and the collective wisdom of the political parties.

The Maoist leadership has wisely chosen to cancel its planned mass gathering after realising that the strategy to pressurise Valley residents into giving their cadres food and shelter was not just unpopular but was also sparking resistance. By signing the agreement the Maoists have consented to

accept the wishes of the people. Now the other parliamentary parties also need to prepare a taskforce for progress and speed up the process of reform.

The responsibility for transforming the country falls on the shoulders of the representatives of the people and the political parties, which must be willing to change, respect the voice of the masses, be democratic, transparent, and visionary. The eight parties must now make it their chief responsibility to ensure a constituent assembly takes place. Unless the parties implement the agreement in action, the roadmap itself will remain unclear.

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# The lost decade-and-half

OM ASTHA RAI

“Use electric heaters, consume more electricity.” What if the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) asks us to use electric heaters so that more electricity is consumed? At a time when Nepal suffers eight hours of power cuts daily even in the rainy season that sounds like a daydream. But that is exactly what the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) was exhorting us to do 15 years ago.

After Kali Gandaki-A added 144 MW hydropower to the national grid in August 2000, NEA had a surplus of electricity. The *Nepali Times* had just started, and an NEA official was quoted in the #102 edition of August 2002 as saying: “We have to trade the surplus that has started to accrue in the system.” Needless to say, the euphoria over surplus electricity was short-lived. The NEA could not meet the rising electricity demand, the



conflict and mismanagement delayed new projects, and heavy loadshedding started in earnest in 2006. Nearly a decade on, power cuts have become such a part of life that no one bats an eyelid when the lights go out even during important functions. Last week, the government unveiled a plan to restrict load-shedding to eight hours a day in the winter of 2015 – and it touted it as if it was a major achievement. Hydropower is just the most glaring example of governance

failure in infrastructure in the past 15 years. Most development projects that were launched in or before 2000 are still incomplete or suspended, and we are now forced to deal with a string of shortages: from energy to water and food. These failures are all the more glaring because Nepal has actually made dramatic progress in reducing the poverty rate, improving maternal and child health and school enrollment. But when it comes to economic indicators, the years between

2000 and 2015 were worse than ever before. Govinda Raj Pokhrel of the National Planning Commission says the last 15 years were disastrous in terms of economic indicators. “It is as if we are now stuck where we were two decades ago,” he told us in an interview this week. “Progress in social indicators is probably the only thing which we can be proud of.” In the 1990s Nepal’s annual economic growth rate was increasing. The government adopted a liberal economic policy that encouraged investors, created jobs and led to economic growth. Multinational companies started to invest in hydropower and in manufacturing, development projects were launched and Nepal’s economic growth rate reached a blistering 7.5 per cent. The contribution of manufacturing sector in the GDP hit 14 per cent. Annual economic growth is down to barely 3 per cent, and

manufacturing’s share of the GDP is 6 per cent. The decline in manufacturing is due to low investment, which translates into fewer jobs and contributes to the outflow of able-bodied migrant workers. One of the factors that took Nepal down was the Maoist conflict. Not only did the war kill 17,000 Nepalis from 1996 to 2006, but also destroyed physical infrastructures, scared away investors and forced the youth to migrate abroad. “The war’s economic cost was so high that we are still struggling to overcome it,” Pokhrel said. When the *Nepali Times* was launched in July 2000, it looked like the Melamchi project was finally going to be completed. In December that year, the Asian Development Bank approved a \$120 million loan for the project to bring in fresh water through a 26km tunnel to Kathmandu. Fifteen years later, the tunnel isn’t even half complete. Meanwhile, Kathmandu is heavily dependent on tankers for water supply. Once a self-sufficient in food, Nepal is now importing rice and other staples to feed its people. We have built transmission lines to not export electricity, but to import from India.

Nevertheless, preparations to pass a new constitution next month have raised some hope that political stability will once more restore economic growth and investment. But the constitution is in itself no panacea if political leaders continue to behave as they have for the last 15 years: fighting over turf and appointment, politicising everything from education to health, and neglecting the economy. There has to be a whole new way to politics and governance if we are to graduate as planned from the status of a Least Developed Country (LDC) by 2022.

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# Flying to eat



Excerpted from Kunda Dixit's column Under My Hat in #61, 21-27 Sep. 2001. The column ran from 2000-2006.

It is a well-established fact of life that airlines and fine dining do not necessarily go together. One does not fly to eat, just as one does not eat to fly -- unless one is oneself personally a fly in which case one flies while eating.

Royal Nepal Airlines is our national fly carrier, and whatever else one may say about it confidentially in adult company after a few drinks, culinary extravagance is not one of them.

There is something about the omelette served on the early morning RA205 shuttle to Delhi that is so sublime it defies description. Obviously, as the Great Helmsman himself instructed, an egg or two had to be broken to make that omelette, but which proportion of what Royal Nepal considers a 'non-vegetarian breakfast' is actually the embryo of a fowl yet unborn and which should rightfully belong in the cracker unit of an oil refinery is hard to tell.

In fact it was only after I had eaten halfway through the styrofoam tray while at cruising altitude Somewhere Over the Western Sector that I suddenly realised I was gnawing no more at said omelette but was wolfing down the plastic plate. If I may be so bold as to say so, the receptacle actually tasted more like an

egg. And after swallowing the mushroom-and-onion-fluoro-biphenyl hexa-propylene tetrachloride omlette it was hard to keep my tray table stowed and my seat in an uptight position for very long without having to make mad roundtrips up and down the aisle to the fore and/or aft lavatories.

Speaking of eggs, RA hasn't yet settled which came first: egg or omelette. But being an equal opportunities employer, Royal Nepal is going to strictly monitor poultry farm conditions to ensure that our two-legged feathered friends (be they broilers or layers) enjoy the basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration before the time comes for them to be converted into airline food. And here we must also think of the rights of the unborn chicken, viz: the egg.

Chicken rights activists are also rightfully up in arms about fowl language that employs poultry terms like 'chicken' when we mean 'coward' -- this callously stereotypes the essence of chicken and is an insult to all roosters. Phrases like 'chick' are ageist and are used derogatorily to describe young women. 'Hen-pecked' is an insult to hendom in general and animal husbandry in particular. Even 'cocks' get a raw deal when used to refer unkindly to one's twinkies. And what of 'cockpits', the arenas where warlike roosters with sharp blades tied to their feet are made to fight each other unto death by humans who gamble on the outcome?

I was looking out at Dhaulagiri and musing on all this, when the flight attendant came down the aisle to ask: "Black coffee, white coffee, or black-and-white coffee, sir?" I

thought: same difference, yar, why not give it a try.

The fluid that was served had a taste that was hard to pin down with any degree of accuracy. So, when she came around again, I said: "Miss, if that was coffee, give me tea. If it was tea, give me coffee." That is the great thing about our national flycatcher: it is full of surprises.

It was when the plane had started making its descent into the Indira Gandhi International Airport that the pilot came on the intercom: "Ladies and gentlemen this is your captain speaking from the arena where warlike roosters with sharp blades tied to their feet are made to fight each other unto death by humans who gamble

on the outcome. We hope you have enjoyed our in-flight service today, we would like to ask you to stow your tray table for landing. That is, if you haven't eaten it already."

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