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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

CONVENIENT UNTRUTH

The emperor doesn't like it when we point out that he is naked.

As the shock of Donald Trump's victory in the US elections gives way to dismay over his choice of White House staffers and the new cabinet, the rest of the world is reminded that western democracy has a design defect which tends to throw up demagogues at regular intervals.

In our own neighbourhood, we have seen the rise of the Indian alt-right three years ago in a similar backlash against established dynastic parties in the world's largest democracy. This year's election in the Philippines elevated a self-confessed death squad gang leader to the office of the country's president. Turkey's elected president has unleashed a draconian crackdown on dissidents. After Brexit and the rise of the wrong right across Europe, it has become difficult to figure out whether it is America that is following Europe's lead or vice versa. Probably both.

Much of the blame for the election upset in the US has gone to the media: a post-truth mass media out of sync with the masses, and a social web hijacked by fake news sites. Facebook in particular has come under intense scrutiny for doing nothing about its toxic ecosystem of falsification. Mark Zuckerberg has

countered this week with a feeble defence that his social network promotes a diversity of voices, and is a technology company and not a media one. That is a convenient untruth. It is like cinema hall owners saying they are not responsible for screening movies with incendiary content.

As Trumpism takes hold, the mainstream media in the United States is questioning its adherence to the doctrine of false equivalence — the journalism rule under which reporters are required to give equal weight to both sides in an argument even when one side is deliberately lying to rabble rouse. The mantra of objectivity is being challenged with the argument that it is more important to be truthful than neutral.

This bit of soul-searching comes at a time when media everywhere is under siege. It has either been forced by commercialisation to abandon its public service remit, or it is being seriously challenged by hate content on the social web. In a parody of economic globalisation, much of the content of these US-based fake news sites have been outsourced and are manufactured in Macedonia or the Philippines.

As Barak Obama found out this week in

Athens during what was supposed to be a victory lap for democracy, the word 'demagogue' comes from the perfectly wholesome Greek word for 'a leader of the people'. It took on a derogatory connotation because the Athens elite looked down on the proletariat. Demagogues today are able to manipulate the media at election time to whip up chauvinism and intolerance so that journalists who adhere to rules lose their relevance in this frightening Orwellian combination of *1984* and *Animal Farm*.

Mainstream newspapers and tv stations do not compete against each other anymore. We all compete against fanatics that spread hate and fear in cyberspace. The real challenge for us in the so-called mainstream press around the world is what we can do when new digital platforms become the tools to twist the truth. How do we find new ways to generate content that spreads tolerance and inclusion? Are we preaching to the choir? What new dissemination tools can we use to reach beyond our silos to those who disagree?

The emperor doesn't like it when we point out that he is naked. Power doesn't like it when you speak truth to it, and power tries to intimidate and harm the messenger. Government agencies have become smarter. They have learnt that jailing journalists attracts needless international attention. So they have refined their methods — censorship today is achieved by behind-the-scenes threats which can be even more insidious and sinister.

It was easier to deal with old-fashioned intimidation and censorship. At least you knew who your enemy was, and we took it as our noble duty to defend democracy and the free press. But what do you do when the threats to press freedom do not happen in a totalitarian state, but in democracies where elected despots are the enemies of free expression.

When the central values of democracy and press freedom are threatened, journalists turn into activists because they are not just defending their own freedom, but the citizens' right to know. We in the media are just the custodians of press freedom.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

Times

THIS WEEK

BIKRAM RAI

Most reached on Facebook

Supermoon as seen from Kathmandu

Seen after 70 years, the #supermoon2016 rises from behind Gauri Shankar, also known as Chomo Tseringma, with a stunning view of Swayambunath in the foreground in Kathmandu on Monday. (42,543 people reached)

Most shared on Facebook

Supermoon as seen from Kathmandu by Bikram Rai (129 shares)

Most visited online page

Jumla gets nearer by Shreejana Shrestha

Most popular on Twitter

Supermoon as seen from Kathmandu by Bikram Rai (159 retweets, 332 likes)

Most commented

A Trump World by Om Astha Rai and Smriti Basnet

YOUR SAY

www.nepalitimes.com

TRUMP

Donald Trump's victory is not necessarily bad for Nepal ('A Trump world', Om Astha Rai and Smriti Basnet, #832). If he cracks down on illegal immigrants, thousands of educated, skilled and young Nepalis will possibly return to Nepal. If these returnees use their knowledge and skills in their homeland, Nepal will be a prosperous country. So we must stop fretting about the outcome of the US elections.

Biswa Nepali

As an American, I apologise for the fear and uncertainty caused by our election of Trump. What is wrong with the US is that money rules the politicians, and love of money trumps love of people. We have many laws and techniques to protect rich people's money, but we have no laws to protect poor people's interests. I hope Nepal can avoid falling into the money pit on its way to forming a better government.

Glenn Harper

AMCHI

I would call Tibetan Medicine Sowa Rigpa ('I am an Amchi', Sabine Pretsch, #832). This is certainly what Amchis in

Malina Sunar

Nepal want to be called. The combination of government support and local awareness program is the key for the survival of Sowa Rigpa. Many people in the villages are slowly moving to modern medicine, but the government, and/or Amichis could start a program to integrate both methods. This would benefit the villagers more, and also strengthen Sowa Rigpa.

Shalav Rana

JUMLA

The government has long neglected Jumla ('Jumla gets nearer', Shreejana Shrestha, #832). Why is it not promoting Jumla as a tourist destination? The hot springs at Tatopani are the best in Nepal, but many do not know about it and it is in a bad shape. The only way to uplift Jumla is through tourism.

Gopal Bhusal

The road connectivity is slowly changing the lives of Jumlis, but there are several issues that need to be addressed. Transformation of Nepali society is not possible unless issues like child marriage, untouchability and gender equality are addressed.

Malina Sunar

Amulya R Tuladhar@AmulyaSir

Just so scared he might die from the callous ruling elite...???!! Let us pray he is successful

Nepali Times@nepalitimes

Govinda KC, who has been leading a campaign to reform Nepal's medical education sector, announces his tenth hunger strike on Sunday.

Kamal Parajuli@kpnpx

@nepalitimes Your authors missed the biggest point - geopolitical vacuum. With isolationist US retreating India and China would move in. Brace for further political instability at the least or absolute subjugation at the most.

Times

nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #833

Q. Who bears the biggest responsibility to prevent money from being stolen from ATM machines?

Total votes: 337

Police: 15.81%

Banks 71%

Customers 13.19%

Weekly Internet Poll #834

To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should naturalised citizens be allowed to hold top posts like President and Prime Minister?

Times

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The business of entrepreneurship

Students planning to study in the United States have to spend up to Rs 500,000 before they even get a visa, or are denied one. With the same amount they could easily start a viable business and generate employment for others, the field is open for anyone starting a business in these fields:



Allo sarkar

Mala Thapa Magar (*pic, above*), 24, has turned a Rs 100,000 investment into Himalayan Allo Udyog, an enterprise worth more than Rs 5 million in just three years. The company uses the Himalayan giant nettle and turns it into a fabric that is known for its strength, smoothness, lightness, durability, and a silk-like lustre.

More than 700 entrepreneurs work at different value chains of the allo plant. Yet, most of allo's potential has been untapped in Nepal's 50 districts where it grows. The processing of the fibre requires only locally-available inputs, *koila* (wood ash) and *kamero* (white clay) or caustic soda.

"Even readying skilled labour force is easy," says Thapa Magar, "as anyone can be trained to make allo yarn and its woven products just in a month."

But the major obstacles are contacting middlemen to access raw materials and reaching customers. An allo investment plan will break even within a year. Profits can be maximised by carrying out allo processing more than once a season, along with production of blended fabrics.

"Most importantly, the business needs a product identity and a passion for hard work," Thapa Magar says.

TRIVENI CHAND and
PANKAJ PARAJULI

Coffee conversation



Despite developing a growing taste for coffee, Nepalis only consume 700 tons of the beans a year. But this is set to grow as Nepali farmers take to coffee as a cash crop in a big way.

Coffee cultivation can be three times more profitable than other cereal crops, and high quality exports fetch a gross margin of over Rs 90,000 per hectare. However, the lack of export incentives for processed coffee beans and fluctuating prices affect farmers.

But domestic demand for roasted coffee is growing and one five-star hotel in Kathmandu consumes up to 70 kg of coffee per day with each kilogram selling for Rs 1,200. "There is a huge untapped potential for the growth of the coffee market," says Sailendra Dangol (*pic, above*) of Sports Coffee House franchise.

Coffee has only met 10 per cent of domestic demand, and there are only 2,000 hectares of coffee plantations in Nepal out of an estimated potential for 1.1 million hectares. The field is wide open for entrepreneurs.



Fertile environment

"Did you go to college so that you can play with cow dung?" the founders of Prarambha Bio Tech, Prabesh Lama (*pictured, left*) and Manish Pratap Singh (*pictured, right*), were often asked. But no one laughs at the entrepreneurs who saw wealth in waste, and are now making a fortune selling fertilizer from compost and vermiculture anymore.

Using earthworms to convert biodegradable waste into fertilisers, vermi-compost offers three important ingredients for plant life: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK). The resulting product has no smell and is packaged for sale at supermarkets and bazars.

What makes it an attractive business proposition is that vermicomposting needs low cost inputs, and brief technical training. The business plan looks like this: employ 2,000 earthworms to digest organic waste over six months at a cost of \$300 to produce 2 tons of vermicompost that can sell for \$1,000. Besides the \$700 profit, there is an additional \$300 income from the sale of excess earthworms. Prarambha Bio Tech started by producing just 300 kg of fertilizer, and it now sells 40 tons per cycle.

Say churpi

A popular hard cheese made from yak milk in Nepal's mountains is proving to be a lucrative product in the pet food industry worldwide. Himalayan churpi made from the solid-no-fat part of yak milk is now sold in the pet section of supermarkets in Europe and the United States and is worth nearly \$110 per kg.

Once a source of income for many yak herders, churpi had almost disappeared. But the new emerging market for churpi-based dog chew and the high prices has boosted the income of dairy farmers who can now expect to earn up to Rs 300,000 per season

with an average herd of 20 yaks. In fact, the problem may lie in insufficient supply of milk because of the lack of government inputs to raise the productivity of yak farms.

Pasang Dorje is a farmer who has seen milk production drop and a high vet bill. There is almost no support from the government. A churpi collector makes a gross profit of Rs 75-100 per kg, being churpi exporter can earn a profit of Rs 800 per kg.

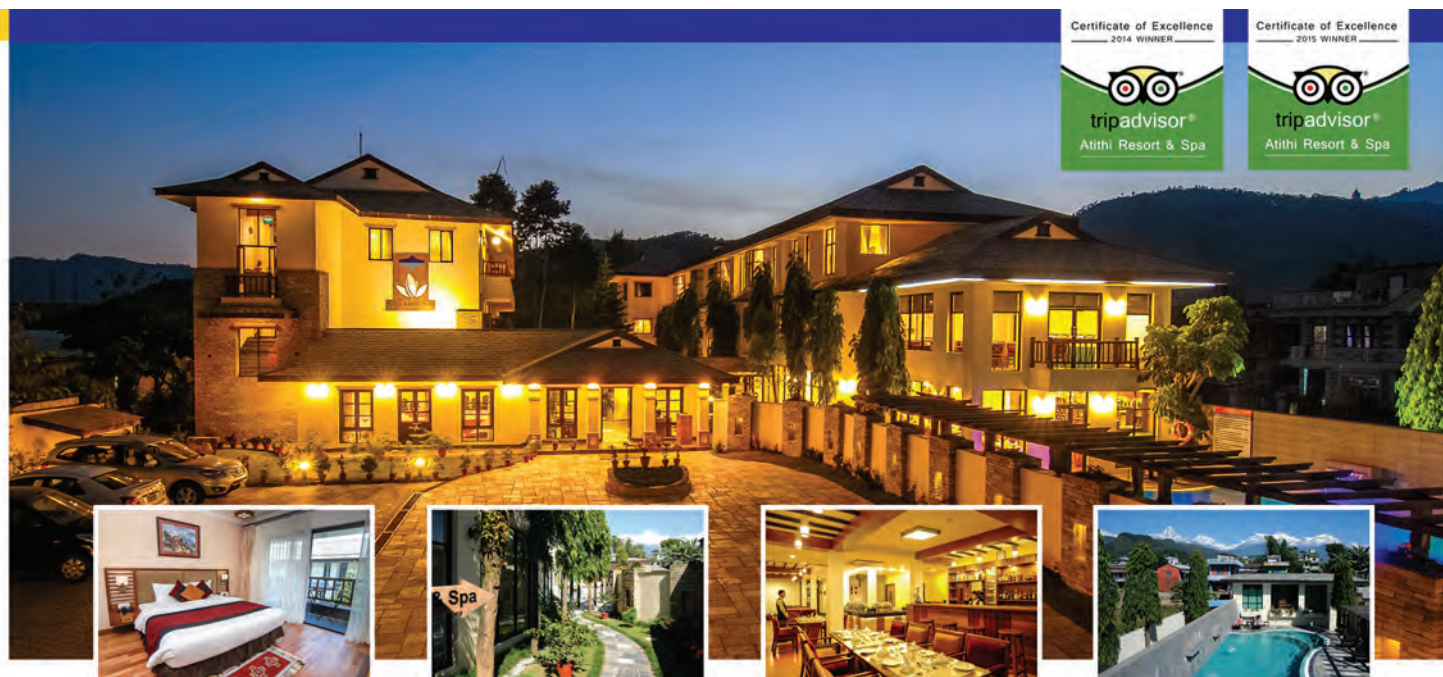
"The major hurdle is ensuring standard size and quality demanded by exporters," says churpi collector Tshering Tund (*pic, right*).

There is also a problem of quality. Mould and other damage means that exporters like Premu Rana can only sell 200

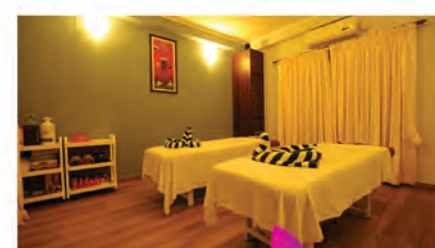
of the 300kg from one churpi collector. He could salvage another 85 kg to sell in the local market, but he earns only half of the Rs 1,000 that he would earn for a kg for export.

The non-profit Institution for Suitable Actions for Prosperity (ISAP), is working to provide basic training in animal husbandry and medical knowledge to farmers and collectors as well as tools to maintain standard quality and sizes.

Triveni Chand is a Program Associate at Institution for Suitable Actions for Prosperity (ISAP) while Pankaj Parajuli is the Executive Director at Institution for Suitable Actions for Prosperity (ISAP).



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Sketching Bagmati

SMRITI BASNET

Once crystal clear, the holy Bagmati flowing across Kathmandu Valley today is one big dumping site for garbage. What used to be a destination for pilgrimage is now a filthy stench-filled sewer.

In hopes of reviving the enthusiasm for change and the river itself, Cuban-American artist Alberto Rey and American graphic designer Jason Dilworth have come together for the unique Bagmati River Art Project.

Fourteen paintings of the Bagmati as seen from Sundarijal, Gokarna, Guheswori and Chobar have been put together after an extensive field trip with a team of scientists earlier this year. The exhibition on the 20-23rd of November at Siddhartha Art Gallery will feature paintings by the duo along with works of Kathmandu University students and other visual-media art forms.

As an artist who has been dealing with contemporary issues, including environmental woes, Rey's artworks of Bagmati do not paint a grim and grimy picture. His approach is rather to make the artworks aesthetically pleasing, giving viewers a certain exotica when seen from a distance.

"It is very easy to make

something ugly look ugly. But if it is not attractive, people are going to dismiss it. How can you then seduce the viewer to look at the painting?" asks Rey rhetorically. The artist compels viewers to view the images more closely, eventually leading them to spot minor details that really portray what the Bagmati really is.



GOPEN RAI

To fully comprehend the crisis of the Bagmati, the artists have paired their work with charts. These colorful graphics carry core data from the Bagmati River Expedition 2015 to show the impact of pollution on the river.

What motivated Dilworth was the need to make the audience empathise with the data rather than take it as yet another fact-based finding or get completely lost in scientific jargon. "This hopefully will cause them to pause," he said.

The multimedia project also includes a documentary and a book, which also comes with Nepali translations that detail

the history, cultural significance, policies and future challenges for the Bagmati. Having sifted through more than 200 government reports and research papers, Rey and Dilworth's objective has been to make the information available to the public.

"Art has a way to make important information accessible to the public in a way that they are more likely to want to know about it," said Rey.

After the three-day exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery the exhibition goes on a tour of major cities in the United States.

"When people think of Kathmandu it is either as a mystical or backward place. But this project shows that it is like any other river in America," said Dilworth.

Believing that there is still a lot that the international community has to learn from Nepal, especially when it comes to community efforts to clean up the Bagmati, the artists are optimistic about restoring the river to its former glory.

Said Rey: "How can we solve it? I don't have answers to that yet. But we want to present a sense of hope." 🇳🇵

Bagmati River Art Project, 20 to 23 November, 11 am to 5 pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048, 4433930

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Power packed

Micromax has launched its new phone, the Q397 in the Nepali market. The phone runs on Android 6.0 marshmallow and is powered by 1.3 GHz quad-core processor. It comes with 8MP primary camera and 2 MP front-facing camera. Q397 is priced at Rs 10,560.



small and medium sized business and microfinances. With this, the bank now operates in 36 districts across Nepal with a network of 59 branches, two extension counters and 79 ATMs.

Bingo!

Electronics manufacturer OPPO held a prize distribution ceremony



for the winners of it 'Oppo Bingo Offer' scheme. The event was held at Tamrakar complex, Kathmandu.

Telecom of the year

Ncell has received the Telecom Company of the Year award at the



2016 Nepal Best Practices Awards. International growth partnership company Frost & Sullivan conferred the award.

Laxmi expands

Laxmi Bank recently added two new branches at Rampur, Palpa and Kaushaltar, Bhaktapur with the aim of providing complete banking solutions to individuals,



Corporation (IFC) to discuss mutual cooperation between the two.

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The charade of impeachment

As Parliament dilly-dallies, the Supreme Court presses ahead against Lokman Singh Karki

Three weeks ago when one-fourth of parliamentarians signed an impeachment motion against the anti-corruption czar, Lokman Singh Karki, there was a brief period of optimism that the House was finally getting serious. Hope rose that the man who had extorted businesses, terrorised journalists and activists, and silenced bureaucrats and politicians was finally going to be facing the music.



LEGALESE
Binita Dahal

To be sure, there was something unexpected about the way the impeachment motion was hurriedly registered the evening that Karki was returning to Nepal after a prolonged vacation last month. Even more unbelievable was how the Maoist-Centre, a member of the coalition government, and the opposition UML tabled the motion.

However, the Nepali Congress became the fly in the ointment. Although party president Sher Bahadur Deuba had at first given a tacit nod to Karki's impeachment, and Health Minister Gagan Thapa led the charge, the rest of the party opposed the move. After returning from a visit to India,

however, Deuba has suddenly gone all quiet. And in recent days some NC MPs have been vocally defending Karki, and his cronies are actively lobbying to delay the impeachment process.

Karki remains suspended from his position as chief of the CIAA (Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority), and faces another case in the Supreme Court that questions his appointment. He tried to ignore the summons when Supreme Court staff went to his house to paste the notice. The Court summoned him to be present in person for clarification, and Karki finally appeared before the judge on Tuesday with a written clarification.

Karki seems to be more worried about the Supreme Court hearing than the impeachment process in Parliament. This must be because he knows that the impeachment proposal was registered by the one-fourth parliamentarians only after leaders of all three parties suspected that he was going to target them. After all, the top leaders had all agreed to appoint him CIAA chief during the tenure of Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi as head of the council of ministers in 2013. There are dark whisperings about how powerful people and entities lobbied on behalf of Karki at that time.



BHANU BHATTARAI

Karki knows that politicians in Nepal are fickle and can easily be persuaded to change their mind about impeachment by Parliament. In fact, that already seems to be happening as Maoist-Centre Chair and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal told a television talk show this week that the impeachment motion was brought in all of a sudden without his consent, and that there first needed to be a consensus among all three parties on it.

In fact, the political parties and most of their MPs seem to have gone cold on impeachment, preferring to let the Supreme Court take the lead on the matter. This dilly-dallying and wait-and-watch policy is almost as

mysterious as the registration of the impeachment motion itself. Nothing, as they say, is certain in love and politics.

What the politicians should realise is that this is not about Karki, but a matter of principle. Do they have the political will to investigate the truth or not? Or are they so complicit in his appointment that the whole impeachment call is a charade?

The Supreme Court is due to start hearing all cases against Karki on 1 December. The hearings will also perhaps reveal why top politicians as well as President Ram Baran Yadav agreed to his appointment and to what extent, as is widely believed,

foreign intelligence handlers were complicit. To add to the drama this week, the Karki-less CIAA announced it had started investigations on police officers and bureaucrats reported to be close to its former chief and were his accomplices in his abuse of authority.

While the impeachment motion is debated in Parliament and the Supreme Court prepares for its hearings against Karki, the big fear is that the investigation on alleged embezzlement of funds meant for ex-guerrillas in the Maoist camps will be shelved. Which is why Prime Minister Dahal does not want to be too harsh on Karki, remembering his bitter experience with the sacking of Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal which led to his resignation from his first prime ministership in 2009.

Meanwhile, prime minister-in-waiting Sher Bahadur Deuba, does not want to risk an internal party mutiny by going after Karki.

Having said that, the impeachment motion is now being played out in public and the people are closely scrutinising how their elected representatives will respond to a tainted individual. All eyes are on Parliament as it decides whether to impeach Karki, or give him a clean chit in the first case of its kind in Nepal. 🇳🇵

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The cold dry air from the Tibetan plateau pulled in by a sustained high pressure system over Nepal has brought both maximum and minimum temperatures down. It has also kept the clouds at bay. Thankfully, the wind direction has been from the west, but this may change over the weekend brining pollution haze from south of the border.

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GOPEN RAI

Rolling in dough

Swiss chef Fredy Andermatt is in Kathmandu to teach Nepalis the fine art of bakery

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

Sixty years after Swiss development expert Toni Hagen taught Nepalis how to make yak cheese, a baker from Berne is trying to show Nepalis the finer points of making the perfect croissant and apple strudels.

Fredy Andermatt knew he wanted to be a baker since he was 12, and followed his passion to become a world-renowned bakery and pastry consultant travelling the globe to share his knowledge.

After training bakers all over Europe, Africa and West Asia, 56-year-old Andermatt is in Nepal for a month of classes on making 40 varieties of bread, and 30 kinds

of pastries and desserts at the Rana-era former cowshed that has been turned into a state-of-the-art bakery at Dhokaima Cafe in Patan.

"I only train interested people because when you bake, it should come from inside your heart," says Andermatt, who has worked with Nepali chefs in Doha and Dubai and had always wanted to bring his knowledge here.

It is not as easy as it sounds to get the crust of a Swiss apple strudel just right, or to make an apple crumble that crumbles as

it is supposed to. Or vanilla and chocolate banana pies, oatmeal cookies, cream tarts, baguettes, mille-feuille, and varieties of mousse cakes that smell and taste like the originals.

Andermatt has hobnobbed with world leaders at G-8 Summits, been to 70 countries, and says he enjoys training bakers more than baking by himself. In every new country he visits, Andermatt firstly tries to understand the culture and lifestyle and tailor-make his baking accordingly.

The winner of Chef of the Year while working on a cruise liner based in Miami and a frequent



contributor to American culinary magazines, Andermatt brings a Swiss predilection to perfection to his work.

"Like in every profession, discipline and passion are more important than learning the skills," says Andermatt, who has never given up learning and is trying to improve his craft and come up with new recipes.

One morning in the week, Andermatt is busy with hands-on training of the chefs from Dhokaima Café and other bakeries in Kathmandu. He is happy that Nepali consumers will soon be able to savour a wide range of bakery items even after he leaves. But he is happy to share his favourite recipe:

Chocolate mousse cake

Eggs: 5
Baking powder: 10g
Sugar: 200g
Wheat flour: 300g

1. Whip egg and sugar till mixture is white.
2. Add flour and baking powder and put it in a cooking ring, greasing base with butter and dust it with flour.
3. Bake at 175 degrees for about 25 minutes.
4. Cool and make two sponges, each one cm.

Cream: 125g
Chocolates: 125g
Whipped cream: 500g
Gelatin: 30g
Brandy: 10g

1. Cook cream with small pieces of chocolates to make ganache. Cool it down and mix it with whipped cream and gelatin.
2. Moist the sponge with sugar syrup before filling whipped cream mixture and add brandy.
3. Freeze for two hours in deep freezer
4. Take it out and put layer of warm ganache on top again.
5. Put it back in the fridge again for 15 minutes.
6. Decorate with your choice.

nepalitimes.com

Watch video

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Dhokaima Cafe: 01-5522113

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WINE WAVE

Raise a toast to Kathmandu’s new fling with wine

SMRITI BASNET



In 1993, when Prabin Bikram Rana was gifted a bottle of fine French wine his whiskey-loving friends had scoffed at him: “What is this? It does not even give you a high.” Five years later, having returned from university in France, Rana was surprised to see that wine was no more a rarity in Kathmandu's stores.

Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chianti, Merlot, Pinot Noir - slowly but surely, a new wine culture is sweeping in as people in Kathmandu have started to identify, scrutinise and experiment with wine. The trend has been helped along by the surprising affordability of good wines in Nepal.

“People here are ready to accept any wine from any part of the world on the condition that it is of good quality,” said Antoine Garet, a French wine sommelier based in Kathmandu who feels the variety offered in Nepal makes the market interesting. “Here, if people like the wine, they like the wine,” he added, explaining that unlike in France, people in Kathmandu select wine by its taste rather than an established concept of the kind of wine due to its newness and lack of reference.

This willingness to taste wine has expanded the market exponentially. Kathmandu is no longer limited to only European wines but imports New World wines from Australia, Chile and South Africa. The newest entrant is Sula from India, the success and popularity of which goes to indicate the openness of the market to experiment.

Currently, a bottle of fairly decent wine sells for Rs 700-2,000. But there are wines as expensive as Rs 60,000. In addition to the greater availability in stores, restaurants offering house wines, with costs at Rs 500 a glass, has opened up a whole new demographic of consumers.

“The popularity is growing, but with the tax on imported wines, it is still a luxurious drink for many and will be for years to come,” said Garet.

The wine wave in Kathmandu began about 20 years ago when European wines started being sold for astonishingly low prices in the market. “Whether it was the distributor or actual vendor lowering the price, they were attempting to develop the market. If that is the case then it seems to have worked,” said Bruce Owens, an American anthropology professor who has been coming to Nepal for 40 years.

However, for Owens, it is not just the increase in the variety but also the expanding vocabulary which goes to show how the wine drinking culture is transforming.



BIKRAM RANA

What used to be limited to 'sweet' or 'non-sweet' wine has now expanded to include body and other specific details through which Nepali consumers now identify wines.

What helped, Owens believes, is that alcohol was already an important part of the culture in the Valley. “So one didn’t have to overcome resistance to that,” he explained. “And it also developed a certain sophistication of the palette with people already exposed to and experienced enough to distinguish between different *aila* and *thon*, thus making it easier for people to adapt to a complex drink like wine.”

What has boosted the market even more is the burgeoning of restaurants like Vesper House with its extensive selection of wines, resorts like Patleban Vineyard Resort and, of recently, places like House of Palettes that offer customers a quiet evening

with art and wine.

Mausam Bohara, who is a regular visitor at House of Palette, enjoys the occasional glass of wine with friends and family. When asked what could be behind the popularity of wine, Bohara said: “The explosion of places devoted to eating and drinking socially, new restaurants with good wine cellars, wine tasting events, wine used in festivals and anniversaries all contributed to it.”

Alex Muktan of Vesper feels that as an importer, he shoulders an equally great responsibility to educate the customers. “Our aim is to let them know what they are drinking, then eventually they will put an effort and will be keen to learn,” he said. Vespers' well-equipped cellar has become a favourite for many in Kathmandu, and with over 70 labels, Vesper also manufactures wine under its own brand name in Umbria and Lazio of Italy. 🇮🇹

DOMESTIC WINES

Riding the wine wave in Nepal are local companies who have added local and low priced wines.

Hinwa has been one of the early makers of berry-based wines with a bottling plant in eastern Nepal. After suffering setbacks during the conflict, Hinwa is back with an expanded range of products.

"Grape wines have a history of millenia, and it will take time for us to match up to that level," admits Ashraya Ranjitkar of Hinwa, which manufactures *aiselu* and *chutrow* wines. "The Internet and social media have made the world a smaller place and wine is gaining popularity."

This year, Hinwa is aiming for a sales target of around Rs 130 million, up 35 per cent from last year. While Ranjitkar admits that his wine might not be at par with the wines internationally, he feels this growing trend has influenced sales as well.

From a five per cent share of the wine market to now almost 35 per cent, locally made wines are also a big hit in the market. "There is widespread popularity, especially in the age group between 18 and 40, and low prices might be one of the factors," said Ranjitkar.

SEE, SWIRL, SNIFF, SIP



SILVER MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT

Samir Thapa of Silver Mountain (*left*) feels this is the best time to educate his hospitality management students about wines. The oenology lab at his school is doing just that: bringing young Nepalis up to speed on wines.

"Wine is delicate and is an integral part of food in the world," says Thapa, who also conducts trainings for

wine distributors and dealers in the Valley.

With a capacity of 20 students, Silver Mountain's oenology lab is fully dedicated to the education of wine. A compulsory course, students are taught to follow a rigorous routine to sample different wines with the well-known see, swirl, sniff and sip technique. Students are encouraged to experiment with various wines to be able to develop an understanding of its origins, flavours and importance.

"If with awareness we also start categorising wines by quality, encourage wine tasting, if we educate properly and encourage a proper drinking culture, then in the future we can have many Nepali sommeliers," says Thapa. "As educators, even though we don't deal with the public directly, we can educate them indirectly through our students."

Although the market has improved, Thapa still feels there is room for growth. "People need to be introduced to newer products for the market to grow," said Thapa, citing examples of the Opus One Winery in the United States, which makes wine with traditional Bordeaux grape varieties, a winery unique in the Napa Valley.

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EVENTS



Planet Nepal,

A two-day arts festival highlighting environmental issues with the theme of illegal wildlife trade for its fourth edition this year. Go for the art exhibitions, round table discussions, dramas, the launch of the green issue of La.Lit magazine on Friday. Be sure to also check out and attend documentary screenings, wall paintings and concerts by some of Nepal's favourite bands on Saturday. 18 & 19 November, Jawalakhel Ground, Lalitpur, (01) 4241163, 4242832

Karavan Kathmandu,

Join Karavan Kathmandu as the Christmas seasonal markets kick off in Patan. Enjoy the atmosphere as you shop around for high-quality made products and witness the unique Nepalese craftsmanship. 26 November, 12pm to 5 pm, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur.

Book barter,

Put your love of reading to good use and bring along Rs 150 and a book to swap with other book lovers. All proceeds will go to the supplying of books in rural schools. 27 November, 1 to 4pm, near International friendship Children's Hospital, Maharajganj



Monthly mela,

Live music, art exhibitions, craft workshops, local food, open air flea market and more. 26 November, 1 to 7pm, BAC Art Café, Pulchowk, Lalitpur

Yantra 5.0,

A combination of art, technology and science featuring robotics competitions, workshops, art-tech exhibitions and more at Yantra 5.0. 30 November to 20 December, Nepal army training and Physical training and fitness centre, Lagankhel www.ran.org.np For tickets: <http://bit.ly/2eyuODa>

Collaborative master class,

A presentation followed the next week by an open collaborative session with Michael Candy discussing physical design, art and political problems that can be resolved using the unique application of technology. 30 November (presentation), 5:30-6:30pm and 1 December (workshop), 10 am - 2.15pm. Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur. Apply here: <https://goo.gl/forms/ySKAEPoB733Uwuro2>



Celebrating women,

Network with universities, organisations and companies supporting, inspiring and celebrating women. 19 November, 11am to 3pm, Jhamsikhel, Book your seat: <http://bit.ly/2eVtXwF>

Impact marathon,

Gear up for the 10km, 21 km and 42 km scenic trail route runs as part of the Nepal International Marathon. 26 November, 9 am onwards, Kakani, Registration deadline: 12 November, www.marathonnepal.com

Japan and Nepal,

Celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Japan with a live cultural program, food stalls, games, arts and more. 26 November, 10.30 am onwards, Tundikhel Ground, Free entry



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



DINING



Deconstructive dessert,

Delicious deconstructive dessert prepared and presented amazingly in front of you. 14 to 24 November, 3 to 7 pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, (01) 5171234

Barista Lavazza,

The newest addition to the Valley's European inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don't forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich. Lazimpat, (01) 4005124, Jawalakhel, (01) 5548597



Taste of Dhokaima,

Mark your calendars for a scrumptious desert tasting session at Dhokaima which is all set to launch its new line of freshly baked baguettes, delicate mille-feuille, pastries and more baked items. Read more on Page 7. 18 November, 3.30 pm onwards, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, (01) 5522113

Embers,

A large and cosy place that serves a blend of continental and Nepali favourites. Krishna Gali, Pulchowk, (01) 5555306

Lhakpa's Chulo,

Nepali dal-bhat, Newari khaja, Swiss Rösti, Italian risotto, and Thai green curry - take your pick. Jhamsikhel, (01) 5542986

MUSIC



Bipul's Maya,

Enjoy an intimate evening listening to Bipul's new album Maya. Limited tickets available. Sunday 20 November, 6pm, tangalwood, Tangal, Kathmandu, www.kgarira.com

Plebian night,

Come and see the Indie- alternative band Plebeian from Kathmandu play live. 18 November, 7:30pm- 11pm, House of Music, Thamel, Rs 300

Alchemist live,

Cheap beer and chicken BBQ will accompany a live performance by Alchemist. 18 November, 6:30pm- 10pm, BAC art Café, Pulchowk, Lalitpur

Open mic night,

Grab the mic and sing your heart out at the House of Music every Tuesday. House of Music, Thamel, 9851075172

Music workshop,

Grow in your passion for music through workshops that cover how to pitch your work, impact sponsors and promote new releases. 21 & 28 November, 5 & 12 December, Rs 1000 per class, www.katjazz.com.np



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Atithi Resort,

A perfect place to stay, nearby pool, massage, sauna, and delicious food of your choice. Shantipatan, Lakeside, Pokhara. (061)466760 /400207, info@atithiresort.com

Cozy retreat,

A small and tranquilising getaway with a bird's eye view on green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. Balthali Village Resort, Balthali, Kavre, 9851075818



The Last Resort,

Test your limits with canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, and bungee jumping. Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247



ALL PICS: PAUL-HENRY DE BAERE

Skydiving off the roof of the world

After I started Sammy Adventures fortnightly series in *Nepali Times*, people have asked me what my most crazy stunt has been. Without doubt, it is the time I sky dove from near Mt Everest. It is an adventure so adventurous that the Everest Skydive has been listed as one of the 50 ways to be a daredevil by CNN. The Explore Himalaya Everest Skydive — an elite jump conducted twice in a year in spring and autumn. This is quickly followed by more affordable dives in Pokhara each year.



1. Meeting the team

After signing up, the first thing on the to-do list is meeting the team in Thamel. The first thing that strikes you in that roomful of professional skydivers is how big they are. They need to be since most have to make tandem dives as instructors. Ryan Jackson was my instructor pilot for the big dive and has been closely allied with Everest Skydive expeditions since its inception in the year 2008. Led by Team Leader and veteran skydiver Tom Noonan, the team was complete with experienced divers, engineers and a filmmaker.

2. The walk

Apart from the fact that you dive right into the lap of the highest mountain in the world, what makes Everest Skydive special is also how you tune in to the surroundings before making the jump. After a flight to Lukla, the team walks down to Phakding (2,640m) on the first day, and treks up to Namche Bazar (3,440m). The next few days are spent getting to know the place and acclimatising by going on short hikes to Khunde, Khumjung or Thame. It is only on the 5th day that the team reaches its skydiving headquarters and primary landing zone in Syangboche (3,780 m).



3. Jumping off

I was instructed by Ryan to put on my jumpsuit and get rigged for the dive. The previous day we learnt some tips and tricks when up in the air, like safety features, the ideal body posture and how to pose for selfies and videos. At the controls of the Fishtail Air helicopter is ace Italian pilot Maurizio Follini and he coaxes the A350 to climb to 6,000m. With Ama Dablam almost at eye-level I am told to jump off. Surprisingly, I was overcome by a sense of calm and composure.

As Ryan got to the edge of the chopper, with me buckled like a baby kangaroo, I could see Namche Bazar below looking like an anthill. Then at the count of three, off we went flying down. It felt like I was floating in a beautiful dream that would never end. There was a brief few seconds of fear during the free fall with the wind roaring in my ears. Because the landing zone itself is at quite a height, the free fall did not last more than 13-15 seconds, but it was more than enough to completely push me into a zone of ecstatic in-the-moment living. I doubt anything I do for the rest of my life will ever come close to the Everest Skydive experience.

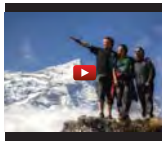
Facts and figures

Apart from the Syangboche Airport landing zone, Everest Skydive also makes Ama Dablam Base Camp and Gorak Shep landings.

Price: \$22,000 (solo) and \$25,000 (tandem)

While Everest Skydive is mostly targeted towards international professional divers, for homegrown adventure-seekers the team organises the annual Pokhara Skydive priced at an average of Rs 60,000 to Rs 70,000 per dive.

www.everest-skydive.com





THE NICE GUYS

Every year remarkable films get ignored as behemoth franchises take over the world with their huge commercial budgets that reach into the psyches of movie goers and permeate the ether with their clout and irresistible adrenaline inducing trailers.

The Nice Guys - a shining, hilarious, insouciant film by the brilliant Shane Black is an example of one of the smaller films (its budget was \$50 million) that got left completely by the wayside (it made just \$57.3 million at the box office) when it opened earlier this year - meaning that further films by Black are less likely to be made, even as the Marvel machine moves inexorably on.

While I have no particular

objection to the action movie franchises which employ tens of thousands and pour money into studio pockets, I lament the sidelining of more original voices like those of Black whose talents include writing the script for *Lethal Weapon* in 1987, and whose directorial debut *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005), starring none other than Robert Downer Jr., was a breath of fresh air.

The Nice Guys, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival this May is an extension of the now classic buddy cop genre starring the truly great Russell Crowe and the usually charismatic Ryan Gosling as a hapless detective duo who flounder hilariously in the midst of a murder mystery scandal that

penetrates into the deep, black heart of 1970s Los Angeles.

Crowe plays Jackson Healey, a thug with a heart of gold who ends up hiring the ever so slightly inept, continually slobbered Holland Cotter (Gosling), a work-out-of-his house Private Investigator, or P.I., whose preternaturally wise daughter Holly (played by the old soul Angourie Rice) is his essential sidekick.

As the three unlikely partners hurtle around trying to find the solutions to a corruption scandal that is truly quite heinous, the film, in addition to being side-splittingly funny, also manages to retain a real gravity, grappling with real evil even as our flawed heroes struggle with their own nebulous moralities, resulting in powerful and accurate character studies of two grown men who have lost their way but manage to regain a sense of decency while they do both right and wrong by the people they love.

Gosling and Crowe steal the show in this classic movie that harks back to the good old days when films told a damn good story, you fell in love with the characters, watched things over and over again, and memorised all the funny lines. *The Nice Guys* is one of the coolest films I've seen this year, memorable, valiant, funny with a heart of gold, and stunning to look at, with style and verve. Can you say the same for anything else you've seen recently? 🇳🇵



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

HAPPENINGS



RSS

ONE CHINA: New Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Yu Hong calls on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at his official residence in Baluwatar on Tuesday.



DIBYARAJ POU DYAL

BANZAI: Japan's Ambassador Masashi Ogawa hands over four ambulances to Nepal Red Cross Society in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



RSS

ALL TALK: Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba (centre) held a meeting with Madhesi leaders on Wednesday to forge a consensus on the contentious clauses of the Constitution.



GOPEN RAI

TENTH TIME: Dr Govinda KC began his tenth hunger strike on Sunday, demanding that the seniormost professor be appointed as the Dean of the Institute of Medicine.



GOPEN RAI

HERO'S WELCOME: Nepal's national football team returns home to a hero's welcome on Wednesday night, after winning the AFC Solidarity Cup – the third international title in just one year.

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Let there be light

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If it were not for the death of a young woman at childbirth, many people in Giranchaur village of Sindhupalchok district could have died when the 7.8 magnitude earthquake flattened their houses on 25 April last year.

The villagers had gathered outside to attend the funeral of 23-year-old Purnima Tamang, who had died after struggling for days to give birth to a baby. She was not taken to hospital because the villagers thought that her labour pain was a result of the wrath of the goddess.

“It was a Saturday, and we normally used to spend Saturdays indoors watching television,” recalls 62-year-old Tasang Tamang. “But we were out that day for Purnima’s ritual. Her death saved our lives.”

One-and-a-half years later, the villagers of Giranchaur still remember Purnima as a young, beautiful and cheerful woman. They no longer remember the ruins of their destroyed houses, and the rainy and chilly nights they spent in flimsy tents for the past year and a half.

People in Giranchaur now have new, clean and earthquake-resistant houses to live in. As thousands of earthquake survivors wait for the second instalment of housing grants from the National Reconstruction Authority, 56 Tamang villagers recently moved into three-room houses with separate kitchens, bathrooms and spacious verandahs. They also have solar, drinking water and internet facilities.

At a time when Nepalis are frustrated at the delay in post-earthquake recovery, the construction of a model village in Giranchaur is a shining light. “For us it is a rare beacon of hope,” says anthropologist Suresh Dhakal. “It has inspired other philanthropists, and put more pressure on the apathetic government.”

The Giranchaur model village was built by an unlikely activist: the Dhurmus Suntali Foundation. Initiated by Sitaram Kattel and his partner Kunjana Ghimire (*pictured*), the most popular comedian duo on Nepali Television, the Foundation is now developing Giranchaur village as a homestay tourism destination.

Giranchaur is located on a mountain top against the backdrop of Ganesh Himal, and above the Indrawati River. With comfortable home-stay, paragliding and a chance to observe the rich Tamang and Newar culture, Giranchaur could attract many tourists.

Named after Kattel and Ghimire’s most iconic television characters ‘Dhurmus’ and ‘Suntali’, the Foundation previously built 19 model houses in the earthquake-ravaged Paharigaun of Kavre district. It collected Rs 5.85 million from the television serial *Meri Bassai*, another serial *Bhadragol* and the social networking site www.sagun.com.

Dhurmus and Suntali made a personal contribution of Rs 900,000, and themselves worked on the construction of the model houses.

After Kavre, Dhurmus and Suntali wanted to build another model village in Sindhupalchok, the worst earthquake-affected district. When they reached Giranchaur village, not many people believed that television actors could actually help them.

“Initially, I did not trust Dhurmus and Suntali,” said Bahadur Tamang, who has recently moved to a new model house in Giranchaur. “But I soon realised they meant it. They worked day and night themselves, and built houses for us.”

After the success in Kavre, more people trusted Dhurmus and Suntali, and they raised Rs 491 million from Nepalis living within and outside the country. At least 225 people, including 70 masons and 65 labourers from the village, worked on the houses. The Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police also contributed.

Dhurmus and Suntali also sold their two-storey house and shifted to a one-storey one to manage the new project.

After the earthquake, they have stopped producing television serials to focus on their reconstruction projects.

Their daughter is sick, and doctors have advised them to take her abroad for treatment, but personal loss did not stop them from working tirelessly for earthquake-survivors.

“Our hearts burn with pain when we see the broken state of our country,” says Dhurmus. “We feel immense satisfaction when we contribute to rebuilding the country.”

Surya Raj Acharya, an expert on infrastructure building, says Dhurmus and Suntali have not only inspired Nepalis but also set an example of integrated development.

“In a mountainous country like Nepal, it would not be possible to build infrastructure for all the scattered households,” he says. “To build the houses at minimum cost, we need the kind of integrated village that Dhurmus and Suntali have helped set up.”



BIKRAM RAI

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WHO GUARDS THE GUARDS?

Simplifying the recruitment process and easing restrictions will help Nepalis working in Afghanistan more than a blanket ban



SENTRY DUTY: After retiring from the Nepal Army, Dhan Singh Dhama worked in Afghanistan 2004-2015 as a security guard for an American contractor. He wanted to go back to Kabul, but is stuck in Kathmandu (*overleaf*) even after the ban on Nepalis working in Afghanistan was lifted last month.

OM ASTHA RAI

Dhan Singh Dhama could have been at his duty station as a security guard in Afghanistan by now, but a four-month ban on Nepalis working in the war-torn country delayed his plan.

After the death of 13 Nepalis guarding the Canadian Embassy in a terrorist attack in Kabul in June, the government prohibited Nepalis from going to Afghanistan. Dhama was stuck in Kathmandu, and rues: “If it

were not for the ban, I would have earned Rs 600,000 by now. I lost three months’ salary,” he said. But one month after the ban was lifted, the 50-year-old ex-soldier is still waiting because he is being given the runaround by

his recruiter. He is not sure if and when he will leave Nepal. Dhama has worked as a guard in Afghanistan before, and is a vocal critic of what he says was a senseless ban. “Are Nepalis not dying in the countries where they



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are allowed to go? Are their bodies not returning in caskets from Malaysia and the Gulf where there is no war?” he asks. “So why does our government stop us from working in Afghanistan?”

Dhami first went to Afghanistan in 2004, two years after retiring from the Nepal Army as a second-class warrant officer. He spent his gratuity to find a job in Afghanistan. For the next 11 years, he guarded the American Embassy in Kabul and assisted the US-led military forces in Helmand on behalf of a security contractor.

Dhami saw plenty of violence and bloodshed – watching some of his colleagues die in front of him. But he wasn’t afraid, and the pay was good.

When he retired from the Nepal Army, he just had an ancestral house in remote Darchula district in the far-western mountains. He now owns a two-storey building in a housing colony in Kathmandu.

“I risked my life for money, but tell me one place where there is no risk?” he asks. “It was risky during the Maoist war here, and I was nearly killed many times.”

Dhami was previously recruited by DynCrop International, a private American military contractor. He returned home in December last year, and again applied for a job through another company, the British-owned Aegis Defence Services.

But the ban came in the way, making his departure uncertain. Buddhi Gurung of the EMP Nepal, a local agent of the British company Aegis, says at least 70 Nepalis were in the final stage of going to Afghanistan when the ban was announced.

Since 2011, Aegis has hired 865 Nepalis retired from the British, Indian, Nepal armies and Singapore police. It is still seeking 200 extra guards through EMP Nepal. Aegis, DynCrop and all other private contractors filled in for the gap left by Nepalis during the ban by recruiting guards from India and Kenya.

In July, the government sent a fact-finding team to Afghanistan to decide whether the country was too risky for its citizens and to recommend safety measures. The Labour Ministry lifted the ban last month on the basis of the team’s recommendation.

But it is still not easy for Nepalis to go to Afghanistan because of a new government requirement that private contractors have to submit a copy of their agreement papers with original employers before



BIKRAM RAI

recruiting guards from Nepal.

For example, if the DynCrop needs to recruit ex-Gurkha soldiers to guard the American Embassy in Kabul, it has to send a copy of its agreement with the United States government to Nepal’s Department of Foreign Employment.

Prabha Shrestha, joint secretary at the Labour Ministry who led the fact-finding mission to Afghanistan, explains: “It is to ensure accountability if an attack like the one at the Canadian Embassy occurs again. If we know what is there in the actual contract paper, we know whom to hold accountable.”

After the Kabul attack, Sabre International that had hired Nepali guards to protect the Canadian Embassy, was accused of not providing adequate compensation and not bearing medical expenses of the wounded Nepalis. Members of Nepal’s Parliament slammed the Canadian government for trying to wriggle out of its responsibility to help the victims’ families.

Although well-intentioned, the requirement has meant that Nepali guards find it difficult to go to Afghanistan even if the ban has been lifted. Private contractors are unwilling to disclose their agreement with foreign embassies in Kabul.

“It is a hurdle,” admits SB Ghising of Stevand Gurkha Overseas, the local representative of DynCorp. “We are ready to submit a copy of our agreement with the American contractor, which reveals salary scales, insurance amounts and safety measures. But the contractor will probably not disclose its agreement with the American government.”

Because of this restriction, the contractors that recruit Nepali guards for UN agencies, American and British embassies, and provide better salaries, insurances and facilities have not taken anyone from Nepal even after the lifting of the ban. Only 165 Nepalis have got labour permits to work in Afghanistan as guards, plumbers, electricians and

cooks after the ban ended.

“This is what happens when unnecessary restrictions are imposed on the legal way of migration,” says Padam Upadhyay of Universal Connection, the representative of IDG Security that hires guards for UN agencies. “More restrictions just increase the number of people going illegally.”

Iraq was banned in 2004

after the massacre of 12 Nepalis by a terrorist group, but Nepali workers are still going to Baghdad. After Syria and Libya were banned, Nepalis have virtually stopped going there not because of the violence, but because there are no jobs.

Another uncertainty is America’s role in Afghanistan under President Trump, who initially called for the withdrawal

of the US forces from the region. But lately, he has approved Obama’s plan to retain 9,800 troops there. So Afghanistan will attract more Nepalis in future. Experts say the best way to protect Nepali migrants from being extorted and exploited on en route or in Afghanistan is to facilitate their work by simplifying the recruitment process and easing restrictions. 🇳🇵

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Vote for Donkey Party

Being a vibrant democracy, Nepal has always had a trick or two up its sleeves that it can teach the world about how to make this system work even more vibrantly. And I have to grudgingly admit that Americans are the quickest learners. After 200 years they're finally getting the hang of it.

I would even go as far as to say that American voters are very astute, and we needn't have worried needlessly about the outcome. Nepal uses election symbols like Cow or Rooster to make it easier for voters to decide which party they want to vote for, and the Americans copied this to simplify their own ballot by allocating one party the Donkey symbol and the other the Elephant. Understandably, the Donkeys lost.

There are some cardinal rules that Nepali politicians swear by (some of these swear words are unprintable in a

newspaper also read by minors) which are copyrighted, highly classified and a closely guarded secret, so readers are requested, in the national interest, to use their discretion and make sure they don't blurt these out in public:

Cardinal Rule #1: Announce during the election campaign that you will never accept the result if you lose. And if, by some fluke, you do win you hole-heartedly endorse the result and immediately pronounce elections free and fair.

Cardinal Rule #2: Blame a large country with 1.2 billion people for your trade deficit, taking away jobs, flooding your country with migrants. Threaten to blockade the border, or build a wall.

Cardinal Rule #3: Misogyny and

citizenship are two sure-fire ways to win elections in Nepal which has gone from absolute monarchy to absolute patriarchy. Having three wives is a plus for prospective candidates.

Cardinal Rule #4: Gloat. In Nepal it is regular practice for the winner to take all and revel in triumphalism.

Cardinal Rule #5: Nepalis exhibit their disgust with the winning party by voting with their feet and emigrating to Canada.

It is good to see that the Americans have followed many of these cardinal rules to the letter. Which is why, just as in Nepal, democracy is alive and kicking in the United States. But there are still things in our democratic arsenal that the Americans have yet to master:

- Nepalis value our freedom to burn tyres at corner meetings. Not only are these sooty bonfires great ways to keep warm in winter, they also incinerate rubber rubbish that would otherwise clog up our landfills.
- Lockdowns. In the past 26 years of democracy, politicians have closed down the country for most days in a year. If there were more than 365 days in a given year, we'd close them down too.
- Declare national holiday for high-level state visits by leaders of all countries with more than 1 billion population.
- Grants to ex-presidents and daughters of former prime ministers to receive medical treatment in a country of their choice.
- Chukka jams. Notwithstanding the fact that our chukkas are stuck in traffic jams most days anyway, Nepal's freedom fighters have found ways to enforce spontaneous ways to gridlock traffic so that

- we can burn the greatly more expensive fuel in even greater quantities to protest the shortage of fuel.
- Valley Band. This is something the Americans can pick up from us right away: announce a strike in Silicon Valley and block the information superhighway.
 - One-day Nepal Band. This is when the whole country is forced to voluntarily enjoy a national holiday and a car-free day so that our distinguished foreign visitors can breathe clean air while they are in Nepal.
 - Two-day Nepal Band. If one day is not enough to clean up the air, we close the country down for two days from sea to shining sea. After all, no price is too great to protect our democratic way of life.



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