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## Jugglenaut

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, after waffling for months, has finally decided to bite the bullet on elections. He stretched it for as long as he could to put off handing the prime ministership to Sher Bahadur Deuba of the NC.

Madhesi parties are not on board yet, and have threatened to disrupt elections in Province 2. But Dahal is in no mood to back off now, since he needs votes to boost seats in Parliament.

2017 may turn out to be The Year of Elections. After two decades, there will finally be local elections for the 719 district, municipal and village councils.

Following a Supreme Court ruling that Parliament's term cannot be extended beyond 21

January 2018, the government ran out of excuses to postpone polls. After local polls on 14 May, there have to be polls for provincial councils and federal parliament by the end of 2017.

Dahal faces hurdles all the way. He has to get Parliament to debate the Second Amendment to appease Madhesi parties. He has succeeded in defanging the transitional justice commissions (see page 14-15 and Editorials) but faces criticism from the international community.

UML Chair K P Oli finally allowed Parliament to discuss the amendment bill on Thursday as a compromise for elections to go ahead. But Chief Whip Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal told *Nepali Times*: "We will do everything to foil this

amendment."

The UML has concluded that the ruling parties will fail to secure a two-thirds majority, and is therefore ready to put the amendments to a vote.

Dahal's previous strategy was to win the vote by giving ministerial berths to Kamal Thapa's RPP, Bijaya Gachhadar's MJF (D) and other fringe parties. But these parties backed off because they knew Dahal's days were numbered.

Outgoing Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae visited the Election Commission on Thursday, and reportedly told officials India was ready to support polls if held. The UML is asking Madhesi parties to accept the verdict on the amendment, but they are not in a mood to.

Mahendra Raya Yadav of Tarai Madhes Sadbhavna Party told us: "The amendment bill has to be passed. If it fails, the constitution will fail." 🇳🇵  
**Om Astha Rai**



## Cat Scat

Analysis of snow leopard droppings collected by biologist Madhu Chetri shows that more than a quarter of its diet is livestock, allowing conservationists to design protection measures.

Click *Nepali Times* online to watch dramatic video by Tashi Ghaley's camera traps of snow leopards in the wild in Manang.

BY **SONAM TASHI**

PAGE **8-9**



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# JUSTICE DELAYED, JUSTICE DENIED

The peace process has now lasted longer than the war. We have wasted the past 11 years mired in a transition about which the only good thing we can say is that we are not killing each other anymore.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006 took a step-by-step approach of demobilising Maoist insurgents, disarming them, integrating some of them into the national army, and holding elections for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. Along the way, some politicians (we know who, and on instructions from whom) sneaked in secularism, federalism and republicanism. But that is another story.

The agreement has provisions for transitional justice, including the formation of Commissions for Truth and Reconciliation and on Enforced Disappearances. After years of foot-dragging and after running out of excuses, an Act was finally passed. But it is flimsy, toothless and did not meet international norms.

The reason for this was evident. The former adversaries are now components of the state. Mortal enemies are, in fact,

now partners in the governing coalition. Prime Minister Dahal's Maoist guerrillas tried to kill the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba in a landmine attack in 2003, and Deuba announced a ransom for Dahal's capture dead or alive.

Since leaders on both sides are on the same boat, no one wants to rock it. Maoist, NC, and RPP leaders are all responsible for human rights violations, and therefore do not want to rake up the past.

The leaders benefit from an apathetic public that wants to let bygones be bygones. Even families of the victims have neither the time nor money to pursue justice. They do not know how to work the system, where to go to seek redress.

Relatives of the disappeared, victims of torture do not expect the government to ever compensate them or provide justice, so they do not even ask for it. Most families would therefore be happy just to know the truth of what happened to their relatives.

As we report in this issue (*page 14-15*) and as activist Charan Prasai argues in the Guest Editorial (*below*) it is no surprise that the term of the commissions have been extended by another year. They were just fig leaves, anyway, and another egregious example of Nepal's *bhagbanda* politics. A

henchman of Agni Sapkota, the accused in the Arjun Lama disappearance, calls the shots in the TRC. Bal Krishna Dhungel has nothing to fear. Ganga Maya Adhikari withers away in hospital seeking justice.

The political leadership wants to be seen to be on the side of truth and justice, but wants neither.

GUEST EDITORIAL  
CHARAN PRASAI

## Trust and the TRC

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has wasted its first two years, and is unlikely to deliver justice to conflict victims even during the one-year tenure extended this month.

The TRC blames the government for not amending its controversial Act in line with the February 2015 Supreme Court verdict against general amnesty for perpetrators of gross violations of human rights. But if it was serious, the Commission could have begun seeking truth and investigating war crimes without waiting for Parliament to amend the Enforced Disappearance Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2014. All it did in two years, however, was to collect complaints, 58,000 of them.

The composition of the TRC serves the interests of politicians who want to be absolved of guilt, and does not share the need of victims' families for truth and justice. It took a full decade after the war ended for the TRC to even be formed. The fact that conflict victims had to go to the Supreme Court for redress proves that they never saw it as a justice mechanism.

When Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who himself faces charges of war crimes, visited the army headquarters to assure generals that they would not

be punished for their own conflict-era excesses, the TRC remained conspicuously silent.

At a time when Nepal's war victims need solidarity, the international community is also losing interest in Nepal's transitional justice. That indifference could be a result of geopolitics, and an attempt to protect the peace process at the expense of justice.

TRC members handpicked by the Maoists are loyal to PM Dahal and his comrades. Their strategy is to delay justice, take wartime crimes to the TRC and argue that they never sanctioned use of child soldiers.

If the TRC is allowed to work fairly and independently by revising its Act to follow international norms, it is conceivable that Dahal and NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba will likely get a clean chit, and will no longer have to fear being arrested abroad in accordance to the doctrine of universal jurisdiction.

They are therefore wrong to try to undermine the TRC's mandate. We want justice, not to send top leaders to jail, but to heal wounds and prevent another violent conflict in future by delivering justice today.

*Charan Prasai is the Coordinator of the Accountability Watch Committee.*

Times.com

### ONLINE VIDEOS



**GO GREEN ONLINE**

Every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, Green Growth's Nischal Pandey dispatches boxes full of greens that come from districts like Jumla, Ilam, Mustang, Kavre, Biratnagar to online customers in Kathmandu. Follow him as he sorts, packs and delivers green baskets to customers of this homegrown start-up.



**SHOOTING SNOW LEOPARDS**

Snow Leopards are struggling against extinction and are in the IUCN Red List because of poaching, habitat destruction and climate change. The good news is the analysis of the endangered cat's droppings has given scientists clues on how to protect them. Watch a rare and intimate camera capture video of snow leopards in Manang by Tashi Ghaley, field biologist at the Global Primate Network (GPN).

### MOST WATCHED



**YOU TOOTLE, TOO?**

Video of the new motorcycle ride-sharing app Tootle created lively interaction (93,000 views and 435 shares on Facebook) on *Nepali Times* online last week. If you missed it, watch the video again to see how this transporter, cheaper than a taxi and faster than a bus, actually works.

#### SAFE RIDING

I like the ending words that both riders should wear a helmet ('Kathmandu's Silicon Alley and the Law', Sonia Awale, #846). Tootle needs to ensure that they provide the passenger with a helmet, or set a rule that they won't pick up someone without them wearing a helmet. Stay safe!

Kalps Para

#### TRANSPARENCY IN START-UPS

Govinda Giri's personal story is fine but an investor should care more about his business ('Soon, Sagoon', Sahina Shrestha, #846). He hasn't released basic metrics of social media platforms such as MAU (monthly active users), churn rate, CTR (click through rates), CAC (customer acquisition cost) etc. I'd invest if he is honest about building a real company and releases those numbers as well as current financial status of the company. Let's just hope he's not trying to pull a get-rich-quick gimmick.

Bishnu

### WHAT'S TRENDING



**Kathmandu's Silicon Alley and the Law**

by Sonia Awale

Archaic laws and limited e-commerce hold back start-up offering a new motorcycle ride-sharing app which logged 1,000 rides in the first month of operation. Click *Nepali Times* online to watch video.

- Most reached on Facebook** (230,863 people reached)
- Most shared on Facebook** (434 shares)
- Most visited online page** (2,750 views)
- Most commented** (121 comments)



**2 million by 2020**

by Shreejana Shrestha

Nepal has set an ambitious target to increase tourist numbers, but is it realistic? Yes, says Tourism Minister Jiwan Shahi in an interview with *Nepali Times* online.

**Most popular on Twitter** (39 retweets, 124 likes)

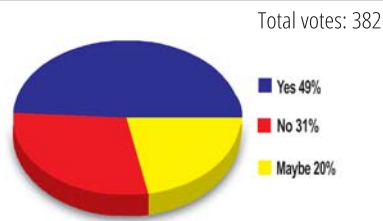
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Why is the post-quake renovation of Kaiser library, once the largest private library in #Asia still in limbo? <http://bit.ly/2kLohZ7>
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Weekly Internet Poll #847

Q. Can Nepal attract 2 million tourists by 2020?



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Q. Are you casting your vote in local elections in May?

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# Who is the Madhesi subaltern?

The most dangerous possibility of Nepal's modern era is that of eruption of inter-community conflict. Fortunately, the people on all sides have refused to jump off the precipice despite having been dragged to the edge.



**ON THE WAY UP**  
Kanak Mani Dixit

There is of course a spectrum of disaffection among communities marginalised by the Kathmandu-centric state, from the hill/plain Dalit to the Janajati, to the western Khas steeped in poverty, the Himali people of the northern rimland, and the micro-communities all over.

But it is the dissatisfaction among the Madhesi citizenry that represents the most serious challenge to the (mostly Bahun-run) state apparatus, which is asked to mend its ways and become inclusive in order to reflect the unique demographic diversity of Nepal.

The country's future is presently caught between the insensitivity of national party politicians and desperation of plains-based leaders fighting for political survival. And it is the Kathmandu leaders and civil society, being in or close to power, that are to be held more accountable.

**Janakpur and Jaleswar**  
'Madhesi', in its current usage,



is a term specific to Nepal, connoting citizens of plains origin. Anyone who defines Madhesi as 'Nepalis of Indian origin' must consider attending re-education camp. While the demography across the international border tends to be the identical, a Jha citizen of Birganj is a Madhesi but not the Jha of Raxaul.

Kathmandu has historically discriminated against the citizens of plains origin, as it has against the Dalit and the Janajati. But the Madhesi have been doubly disadvantaged, for being marginalised socio-economically as well as socio-politically – the projected national self-identity being linked to mountain habitat and culture.

In the modern era, it was not only Kathmandu's rulers, but also the foreign embassies and aid missions which over ignored the Madhesi over the decades. When they did get into inclusion in the 1990s, the donors concentrated on the Dalit and later the Janajati fold.

This neglect and lack of funding infusion meant that

Madhesi identity activism got opportunity to be genuinely politicised, and communitarian grievances exploded in the form of the Madhes Movement of the winter of 2007-8.

The Movement forced the rest of Nepal to concede the Madhesi's right to full ownership of the state, even though there has been foot-dragging

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BIKRAM RAI

in ensuring communitarian inclusion (continued till date). Significantly, the denigrating usage of ‘Madhisay’ or ‘Marsya’ more or less disappeared from the

public discourse, and the new Constitution was shaped in part by the energies released by the Madhes Movement.

Consensus politics

What seems to be the current distancing between hill and plain is for now one between the ‘Madhes-baadi’ leadership and those who run the state administration. But how incredible that, despite the shock-wave of identity-led politics, the *bhagbanda* share-the-spoils consensus politics has today left the goal of inclusion in state appointments relegated to the outhouse.

In state institutions, from the bureaucracy and academia to the judiciary, the hold of the hill Bahun remains firmly in place. One looks to the implementation of the new constitution (through three tier elections) to break the logjam of exclusion. The fact that our national leaders have not internalised the lessons is seen in the brazen appointment last week of 14 new ambassadors, with a lone nominee of plains origin.

Inclusion should be integral to the Nepali state, and it should set an example for all Southasia – a country where appointments to state office are *ipso facto* proportional without relying on tokenism. A fully inclusive politics will have been achieved when non-Bahun/Chhetri politicians not only become powerful but function as power-brokers.

Questions

As far as ‘Madhes-baadi’ activism is concerned, we must ask how far the push for plains-only

provinces (as the central agenda) helps the population of the plains, given that the density of population and poverty are both concentrated here. Does Province No. 2, the only all-plain entity thus far, and the only one defined by identity among the seven, hold the promise of progress for its inhabitants?

*More questions:* Do the dozen frontline leaders of the Madhesi Morcha represent the people of the plains, given that only two of them (Upendra Yadav, Mahendra Raya Yadav) won seats through direct elections in 2013? How does laying claim to the five-month blockade of Nepal conducted by Indian authorities help the cause of the plains citizenry?

Who represents the voice of the Madhesi masses, given the preponderance of the socio-economic-cultural elites (the ‘BhuRaBaL’) at the forefront in challenging the new Constitution? We are asked, correctly, to stand on the side of the subaltern, the marginalised. Who speaks for the subaltern Madhesi, substantial and marginalised nationally and further so within plains society?

Having waded into the fraught arena of identity politics, this writer can only reiterate his position on the underlying demand of the present agitation: Provinces that incorporate hills and plains are the best for progress of citizens, particularly of the plains with its habitat density. However, given that we already have one plains-specific province, and may have more, we must rise to calibrate inter-province relationships so that the plains people do not suffer socially, economically, culturally and politically as a result. 🇳🇵

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Low energy ACs

Him Electronics, the authorised distributor for Samsung, Himstar, Bajaj Electronics and Timex has launched an air conditioner brand “Galanz” in Nepal.



Introduced in four different models, Galanz ACs have super cooling, air cleaning and uses low energy and keeps the noise at minimum.

Entertainment on air

Qatar Airways has been awarded for its in-flight entertainment system for a second consecutive year at the annual Aircraft Interiors Middle East Award. The airlines offers a wide-selection of



entertainment programs in multiple languages, with more than 90 feature films and 220 TV shows updated every month for frequent travellers.

Winners announced



Winners of Berger Rangamanch contest has been announced through a lucky draw conducted

by comedian Deepak Raj Giri and actress Reecha Sharma. While Pushpa Khatri Chetri of Pokhara won the bumper prize Figo Car, Binod Rijal of Kathmandu and Sangita Ale of Pokhara each won 200 cc Pulsar motorbike.

Turkish Airlines

Turkish Airlines which flies to more countries than any other airline in the world has launched its new commercial



starring Oscar Winning actor Morgan Freeman. Europe’s Best Airline for six consecutive years, the airline had done a similar promotional video last year with ‘Batman v Superman’ theme.

Himalayan in Itahari

The new building of the Itahari branch of Himalayan Bank has been inaugurated by



the Chair of its Board of Directors Manoj Bahadur Shrestha. Speaking at the event, Shrestha said that the bank will expand its services to help boost economy at local level and customers will get to enjoy locker service with the new office.



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# Of local, for local, buy local

New online business reduces carbon footprint of urban consumers by extending the digital footprint of farmers

SMRITI BASNET

A section of the B.P Highway that collapsed into the Sun Kosi river on Sunday night could have cut the supply chain of Green Growth, but the new online shopping portal for organic produce has a built-in flexibility to survive setbacks.

The innovative start-up delivering home-grown products relies on Nepal's spreading highway network to source fruits and vegetables and sell them to urban consumers through the Net.

"Usually we are well stocked for products that come from faraway places, so we were not affected by the blockage on the Sindhuli road, but we try to be prepared for all contingencies," said Nischal Pandey, in charge of Green Growth's logistics.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday are delivery days, and Pandey's team is busy packing online orders into dispatch boxes of fresh greens and fruits that come from places like Kavre, Ilam, Mahottari, Sindhuli, Biratnagar and Jumla.

Working out of a small warehouse in Gairigaun, the team sorts, packs, and sends out boxes of assorted vegetables and fruits much like an Amazon for local organic produce.

"The idea is to connect farmers to consumers through the Net, and as long as farmers are benefitting and customers are getting the right product from the right place at the right price we are on the right track," said Pandey.

Tired of the daily hassle of going to market and buying low quality vegetables possibly laced with pesticides, health-conscious



**E-VEGGIES:** Organic vegetables from Sindhuli and Kavre being weighed before dispatch to customers of Green Growth in Kathmandu who ordered them online.

customers are more than happy to log on to the site for a variety of made in Nepal supplies.

"It has become extremely rare to find pesticide-free food in the market nowadays. None of the vegetables would last without it," explained Rajeev Neupane, one of the portal's consumers.

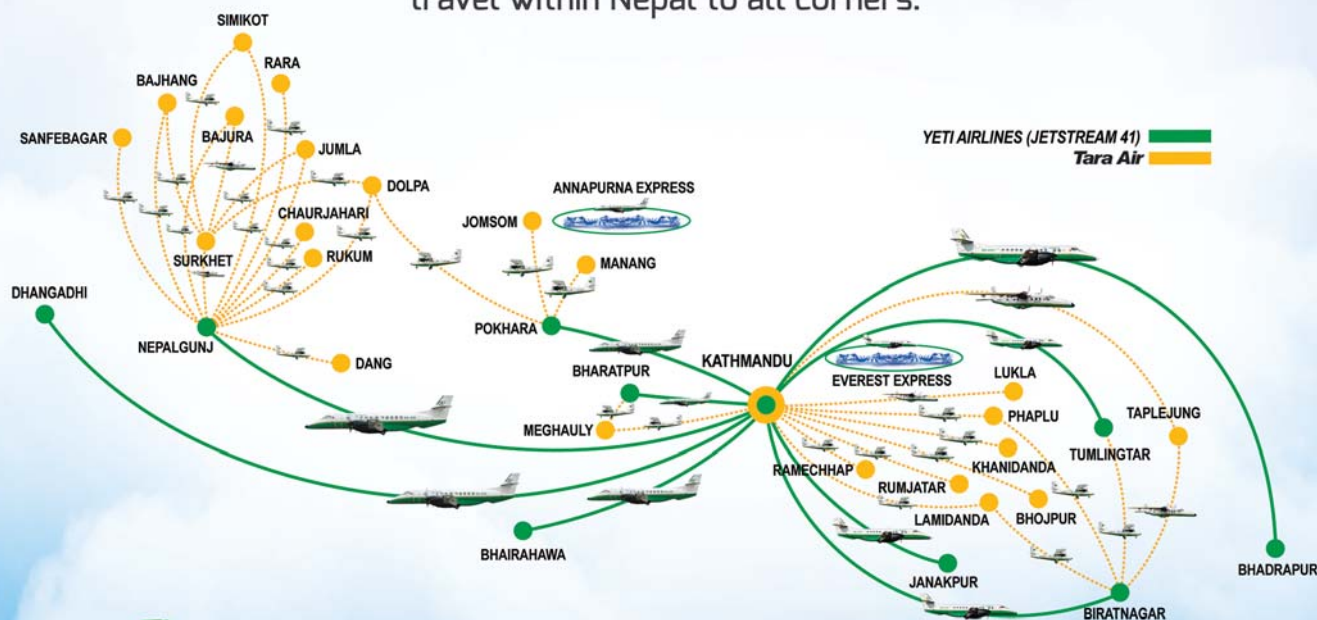
Despite having his own farm in Duwakot of Bhaktapur, Neupane is a frequent online shopper on the Green Growth site for its carefully curated list of Jumla walnuts, Mustang apples, Sindhuli tangerine, or Ilam ghee.

Green Growth is still a bit ahead of its time, but

for increasingly health and environmentally-conscious consumers in Kathmandu it couldn't have come sooner. In just two years it has expanded beyond organic fruits and vegetables to also chemical-free soaps, fruit wines and plants from all over Nepal.

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For once, you can be sure that the haze enveloping the Kathmandu sky is not just the Valley's pollution trapped in an inversion layer, but haze and smog from the Indo-Gangetic plains. Monday night's light drizzle wasn't enough to blow this haze away, although Kathmandu's dust pollution levels decreased slightly. Clear hazy sunshine into the weekend with a westerly front bringing rain midweek next week.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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BIKRAM RAI

Saurav Dhakal calls himself the ‘chief curator’ of the site, and says the business itself grew organically from a workshop he conducted in Jumla two years ago. “We were trying to increase the digital footprint of farmers through Internet connectivity,” Dhakal recalled. “It was meant to

be a theoretical exercise, but to my surprise three months later, the farmers had sent me sacks of Jumla rice.” Dhakal took to social media to sell the highest-grown rice in the world, and the response was so encouraging that it gave him the idea to start Green Growth.

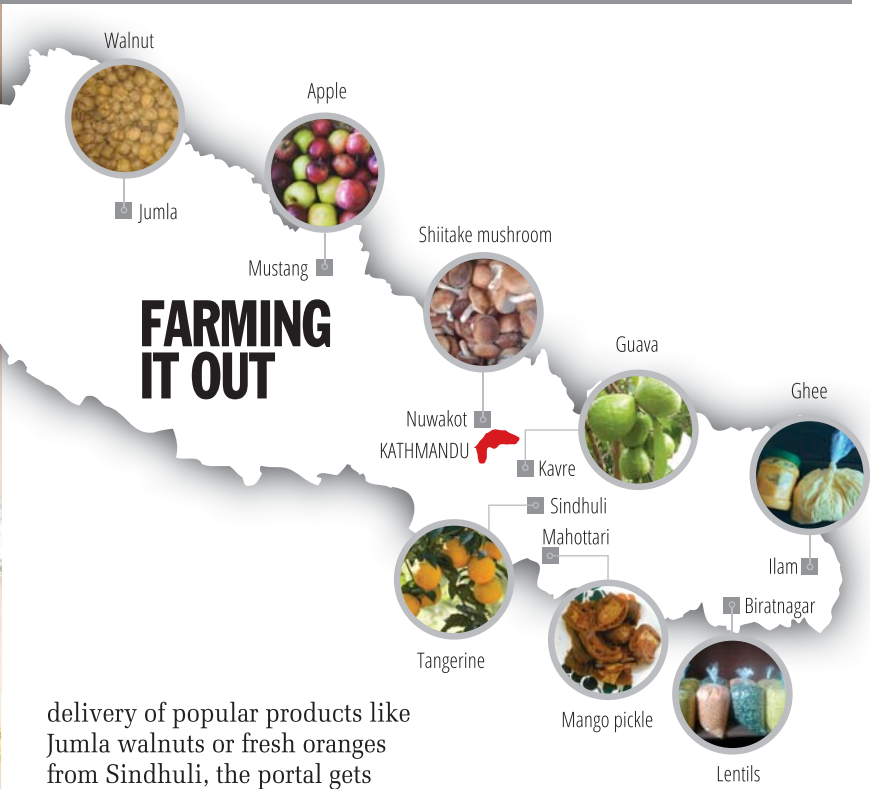
“We didn’t even have a business model or plan when we started, we just did it for fun, and I never imagined I would be selling vegetables through the Net,” said Dhakal who now has a new nickname among his friends: *Tarkari-wala*. Whenever Green Growth takes

delivery of popular products like Jumla walnuts or fresh oranges from Sindhuli, the portal gets more than 100 subscribers per week. But due to limited storage space and the short shelf-life of perishables, Green Growth has to sell the products quickly and the Internet allows it to do that.

“When they have Jumla’s walnuts in stock, I order 10kgs right away,”said Green Growth customer Rosha Chitrakar, who prefers the virtual market to the real one near her home in Kalimati.

Although lacking in technology and resources, Green Growth is promoting a low carbon society in its own limited way. Nepal imports food, vegetables and even flowers from India, and Green Growth’s approach appears to be the path to self-reliance.

This year on Valentine’s Day, for instance, Green Growth sourced roses from Sankhu and sold them through its portal by-passing the city’s flower shops which imported roses from southern India.



“We want to encourage Nepali consumers to buy Nepali products through a Nepali company,” said Samita Kapali of Green Growth, which charges farmers 20% of the sale price as service charge for connecting them to the market through its e-network.

For the future, Green Growth is looking at ‘crowd-farming’ to make entire neighbourhoods farm organically so that the greater economy of scale will bring down prices and allow it to compete with markets in the city.

Kapali said Green Growth strengthens the interdependence of rural and urban economies, and proves that change is possible.

GO GREEN ONLINE

Watch how Green Growth connects organic farmers in remote parts of Nepal to consumers in Kathmandu. Find out how the country's spreading highway grid and social network has made this possible.

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# Studying Cat Scat

Analysis of snow leopard droppings shows more than a quarter of its diet is livestock, allowing conservationists to design protection measures

**SONAM TASHI LAMA**

Being at the top of the food chain in the mountains, snow leopards are an important indicator not only of the health of their Himalayan habitat, but also of human livelihoods.

But the endangered cat is in the IUCN Red List because of poaching, habitat destruction and climate change. It is facing an increasingly uphill struggle against extinction.

Nepal has between 300-500 snow leopards left in the wild, and this is the fourth largest population after China, Mongolia and India. The animal's range stretches across 12 Asian countries.

A growing human population and demand for natural resources is putting immense pressure on the snow leopard's fragile habitat. Conflict between the snow leopard, its prey, nomadic herders and mountain communities has added to existing threats like poaching and climate change.

Nepali scientist Madhu Chetri and colleagues at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences recently spent nearly six months in the Nepal Himalaya collecting snow leopard droppings to analyse their prey, and to find clues about human impact on their habitat.

Chetri and his team published their findings in the journal PLOS ONE about the food habits of the rare cats.

"Our findings could provide effective guidance for building future conservation strategies for the species," Chetri told *Nepali Times*.

The team collected scat samples of the snow leopard and its important sympatric predator of livestock, the Himalayan wolf, for DNA analysis to find out about their diet. The samples were sourced from 26 representative grids above 3,000m altitude over an area covering 5,000 sq km of the Annapurna and Manaslu Conservation Areas.

By the end of the field work, the team had collected more than 800 scat samples of snow leopards and wolves. The results showed that snow leopards preferred cliff-dwelling ungulates like the bharal (Himalayan blue sheep) and Himalayan tahr.

More than half the droppings had traces of the two prey. A significant 27 per cent of the prey of the snow leopard was made up of domestic animals like goat, horse, sheep, yak and lulu cow.

A quarter of the diet of Himalayan wolves was also made up of livestock, with horses being the preferred favourite. Remains of livestock occurred twice as frequently in scat of males as females.

"We now have a better understanding of the relationship between domestic livestock and the snow leopard and their consequences on the livelihood of the local





communities,” said Chetri, who is now trying to evaluate the economic impact of snow leopard kills and finding solutions to ensure the long-term survival of the big cats in the Himalaya.

During his research, Chetri has had some hair-raising experiences of being face-to-face with a snow leopard. It was on his last day in the field in Manang when he was monitoring and guarding the kill of a snow leopard from Himalayan griffons. He remembers bravely looking the snow leopard in the eye and saying in soothing Nepali: “I am not your enemy, I won’t harm you, I am a friend trying to help you.” Chetri said it was the most mesmerising experience in his 15 years spent researching snow leopards in the mountains.

Researchers also say there is an urgent need to find out more about wildlife diseases to prevent cats being infected by other wildlife and livestock sharing the same habitat, as happened to the Saiga antelopes in Mongolia recently.

The Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation is promoting traditional predator-proof corrals and solar powered electric fences to save the livestock of pastoral herding communities.


The worldwide trade of snow leopards is totally banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) putting it in Appendix I. Despite this, up to 450 snow leopards have been poached annually since 2008 alone. This could be an underestimate because many killings by poachers in remote areas go unreported.


Nepal recently released a Snow Leopard Conservation Action Plan (2017-2021) which will guide protection efforts for the next five years. The research by Chetri’s team could contribute to this effort and protect the elusive cat for future generations. 🇳🇵

@SonamTac

### SHOOTING SNOW LEOPARDS



Tashi Ghaley is a field biologist at the Global Primate Network (GPN) and has been tracking snow leopards for more than a decade, especially in Manang. He sets up remote camera traps and shoots snow leopard videos. Ghaley also works with local communities, herders and Annapurna Conservation Area officials to protect the endangered cats. He shows farmers how to keep leopards from killing livestock with foxlights. This video is a rare and intimate capture of snow leopards in the wild. Ghaley has also captured on camera the new cat species, Pallas’s Cat, in Manang.

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

**DROPPING IN:** Nepali scientist Madhu Chetri was collecting samples of snow leopard scat last year in Manang to analyse prey composition when he came face-to-face with this female snow leopard (*big photo, left*) feeding on a bharal kill. "I am not your enemy, I am trying to help you," Chetri told the leopard calmly in Nepali, and he was left alone.

The snow leopard's favourite food is bharal (*below*), which it hunts in steep terrain. Himalayan vultures scavenge the carrion of bharal after the snow leopards and wolves are finished with it.

Madhu Chetri spent six months in the mountains collecting snow leopard droppings. Here he poses (*below*) with the skull and horns of a Tibetan wild sheep killed by a Himalayan wolf in Upper Mustang at 4,800m.





EVENTS



### Shiva Ratri

A day dedicated to the god of destruction, Shiva. Enjoy the Army parade and fly past and sky diving at Tundikhel in the afternoon or join hundreds in the evening as they offer prayers in Pashupati.  
24 February

### Be a trail mechanic,

Ladies can participate in a trailside mechanics skills course led by a renowned mechanic Santosh Rai.  
24 February, 4 to 6 pm, Kar.Ma Coffee, Jhamiskhel, Rs 800 (includes course, coffee and cookies).

### Squat competition,

Register to participate in the 2nd Interclub women's squat competition organised by Jasmine Fitness and Spa on the occasion of Women's Day.  
7 & 8 March, Jasmine Fitness and Spa, Tripureswor, (01) 4117115

### The Diary of Anne Frank,

Those who missed it earlier can save the date for 'The Diary of Anne Frank' which will be screened at Rato Bangla School auditorium.  
25 & 26 February, 6 pm onwards, Rato Bangla School, Rs 700 and 500 (adults), Rs 200 (students)



### Lords of slam,

Book your tickets to experience the magic of spoken word poetry by internationally acclaimed poets Phil Kaye and Sarah Kay.  
6 March, 5 to 10 pm, International Club, Sanepa. Rs 750 (advance sale) and Rs 1,000 (door sale), <https://tinyurl.com/z9rxpv9>

### Textile art,

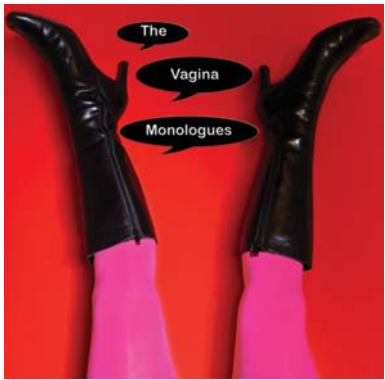
Mark your calendar for an exhibition of Mexican textiles from the state of Chiapas.  
Until 27 February, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal, 11 am to 5 pm, (01) 4433930, 4218048

### Women run,

Jog or walk for women empowerment in this run organised to mark the International Women's Day.  
4 March, 7 am onwards, Jawalakhel Football Ground, Register: [bit.ly/ktmfunrun2017](http://bit.ly/ktmfunrun2017)

### Pinkathon,

Gear up for the Kathmandu Pinkathon, a women only event, and choose to run in 3km, 5km, 10km or 21 km run to promote and encourage women empowerment.  
24 February, 7 to 11 am, Dasarath Rangashala Stadium, Tripureswor, [www.kathmandupinkathon.com](http://www.kathmandupinkathon.com)



### The Vagina Monologues,

Don't miss out on this year's Vagina Monologues 2017 with women's rights advocates from different walks of life. The event is a benefit production for Hamri Bahini.  
25 & 26 February, Shilpee Theatre, Battisputali, For more information: 9801819076  
Tickets: <http://bit.ly/2m9NKjV>

### Meal for a cause,


Watch as Veda, a Russian and English group, performs a spiritual drama and dance. All proceeds from the event go towards the mid-day meal program for underprivileged school children.  
25 February, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 9801205729, Rs 3,500 per person (Tickets available at Himalayan Java, Basantapur, Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka, Keventers, Pulchok, Embassy Restaurant and Bar, Lajimpat and Jawalakhel)



MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI

MUSIC



### Funk for Shiva,

Celebrate this year's Shivaratri with funky music at House of Music. The finale for Black History Month 2017 is going to take place on the same day.  
24 February, 8 to 11 pm, House of Music, Thamel, Rs 300, 9851075172, [sanzey@hotmail.com](mailto:sanzey@hotmail.com)

### Yatra release,

The Midnight Riders will be launching its new album 'Yatra'. Be part of the program and enjoy your Monday night.  
6 March, 7 to 11 pm, Wicked Spoon Fork & Rock, Jhamsikhel, 9841461765, [wickedspoonnepal@gmail.com](mailto:wickedspoonnepal@gmail.com)



### Soothing sufi,

Listen to sufi melodies every Fridays and Saturdays.  
Green Leaves Restaurant, Uttar Dhoka, Lajimpat, (01) 4433002

### Classical night,


Spend a melodious evening listening to Nepali classical music featuring Rabin Lal Shrestha, Prabhu Raj Dhakal and Suresh Raj Bajracharya.  
26 February, 7.30 to 9 pm, Kantipur Temple House, Jyatha, (01) 4250131, Rs 500



### Music festival,

Be a part of this month-long festival and experience music in its entirety. Enjoy jazz, sarangi, reggae and many more genres.  
1 to 31 March, Base Camp, Jhamsikhel, For more nformation: 9841226397, [pareshkshrestha@gmail.com](mailto:pareshkshrestha@gmail.com)

DINING



### Vootoo,

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



### Dan Ran,

The best authentic Japanese food in this part of town.  
Jhamsikhel, (01)5521027

### Alfresco,

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




### Manny's,

Head down for some delicious Corn Fritters, Pad Thai Noodles, Crispy Crunchy Potatoes and don't forget their signature Manny's Spicy Wings all served with fine hospitality in an excellent space.  
Jawalakhel, 5536919

### Mezze by Roadhouse,

Dine at this place with smart, modern interior and chic terrace, and imbibe the Italian culture.  
Darbar Marg, (01)4223087

GETAWAY



### Buddha Maya Gardens Hotel,

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

### Park Village Resort,

Far away from the madding crowd, yet so close to the city.  
Budhanilkantha, (01)4375280, [pvh@wlink.com.np](mailto:pvh@wlink.com.np)



### Fulbari Resort,

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Pokhara, (01)4461918/2248

### Hotel Barahi,

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Lakeside, Pokhara, 061-460617/463526



### Mango Tree Lodge,


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Bhetani, Bardia, [info@mangotreelodge.com](mailto:info@mangotreelodge.com)

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# The return of Erina Tamrakar

Artist Erina Tamrakar's exhibition In Between the Third Eye opens out the world of women, their feelings and emotions to Kathmandu visitors exposed to the daily grind of a squalid urban life. Painted in hues of vibrant reds, blues, greens, the audience is compelled to connect with Tamrakar at two levels: sensual portraits that dazzle us and at the same time force us to think deeply about female empowerment and awareness. "When I paint, I don't paint with a concept beforehand," said Tamrakar, who has returned to the exhibition circuit after two years. "It's like the canvas and I have a conversation. I create as I paint." The exhibition contains her work from 2010 right up to some recent paintings, including from

her way of making the audience engage with the emotions of her subjects rather than establishing direct contact. The whole two floors of Park Gallery are filled with Tamrakar's work, each carrying its own message. In some, women are on an equal footing with nature, in others the emotions of women are captured in a single artwork. Tamrakar's recent works also use monochromes, which portray an evolving society: paintings of women alongside safe tempos that they drive. "It's a step forward for the society," said the artist. She believes it is only with financial independence that women can fully free. Apart from the theme, what sets Tamrakar's art apart from her other paintings is her use of black and white. The artist hopes to sum up the torture that Nepalis went through during the five-month blockade with the use of sombre hues. "I didn't feel like using any other colour at that time," said Tamrakar, who has an entire series on the blockade, but is keeping it to exhibit in future. **Smriti Basnet**

In Between the Third Eye  
Till 19 March, 10.30am-6 pm  
Park Gallery, Pulchok (01) 5522307

# The *Saili* wave

"My wife's name is also Saili, it has been 10-12 years since I've left Nepal and I am about to also reach 40. This is my reality," reads a comment on the YouTube page of the music video of *Saili* by Hemant Rana. Thousands of others have taken to the comments section to say how they can relate to the song which deals with a migrant worker who leaves his wife, Saili, and laments that he will enjoy the fruits of his labour only when he turns 40. Some viewers have been so moved that they have even penned their replies in verse to the haunting lyrics composed by Himal Saud and Kali Prasad Baskota. Songs on migration are as old as migration itself. From the time Nepali farmers migrated to Assam, when they left to join the Indian and British Armies and die for someone else's country, to the present day exodus to the Gulf and Malaysia, the song has resonance among millions of Nepalis who have migrated to provide for their families back home. "Saili is a personal story of each one of the millions of Nepalis who are abroad," explains singer Hemant Rana. "It brings together the issue of migration and love and maybe that is why it spoke to the masses." Inspired by the stories of the Nepalis they met abroad, the writers were giving the final touches to the song when Rana came across the haunting lyrics. Baskota asked Rana to voice the song, and after recording put it up on the Net. There was no looking back. Less than two week since its release, the song is approaching 8 million views online, which is nearly one-third of Nepal's population. The song has earned praise for the singer, its lyrics as well as the sensitive editing and direction of the video which was shot on location in Nepal and Dubai. "It is the singer who carries the song, the lyrics and composition are secondary, and Hemant has done a fabulous job," says music critic Prakash Sayami, "at a time when most of the popular videos either rely on stars or glamour, this one depicts the stories and sorrows of normal people. The video is also technically better than most others out there."



Rana credits the entire team for the song's success. "The composition and arrangement are what makes the song appeal to the ears," says Rana, who decided to direct the video himself. "With my other songs, I felt there were discrepancies between what the song was trying to say and what was portrayed on screen. So, I decided to take the risk and direct this one myself," he adds. Rana chose Gaurav Pahari, his partner in GH Entertainment, to act as the protagonist and cast Menuka Pradhan because of her superior acting skills. Initially, the plan was to start the video from the moment the two parted, but Rana felt their last night together would add poignancy. "I think the intimacy of the moment added to the video and made it more realistic," he says. The video's global reach and popularity is also due to the spread of smart phones among Nepalis and the diaspora, and faster data. Says Rana, "Many Nepalis living abroad who don't have access to Nepali tv and radio can hear the song through the internet, so it was a good decision." **Sahina Shrestha**

HIT BALLAD

The music video *Saili* has gone viral on social media. Superb acting and direction, as well as haunting lyrics add poignancy to the story of migration that retells the tales of millions of individual Nepali lives. Gaurav Pahari acts as the migrant worker who leaves his wife, portrayed superbly by Menuka Pradhan, in a video directed by singer Hemant Rana himself, and shot on location in Nepal and Dubai.

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

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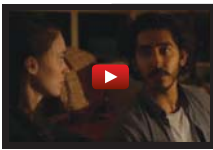




by the open hearted Sue and John Brierley (played by Nicole Kidman and David Wenham) in Hobart, Tasmania, he is reminded of his real family at the house of a fellow student who happens to be Indian. Now in his twenties, the older Saroo, played by Dev Patel, is tortured by his memories, experiencing heartbreaking flashbacks of his mother lovingly teasing him as he brings her little treats whenever he can while she toils.

This film, which ends well, and with many tears on and off-screen, is anchored by the absolutely convincing, heart-rending performances of Priyanka Bose, Abhishek Bharate, and the pint sized, big hearted Sunny Pawar who vividly portrays the tightness of the family unit amidst a dreadful, cruel world - a unity that ultimately draws Saroo back, finding his little village of Ganasthaley (one of the few things he remembers), against all odds, aided, it must be said, by the existence of Google Earth.

*Lion* would be unbelievable if it hadn't actually happened. Even so, watching the film, it is hard to really comprehend the odds that Saroo faced to find his family after twenty years, peering into satellite images from continents away, spurred by the light of his mother's face and the remembered love in her eyes. 🇳🇵



View trailer

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

The terrifying notion of what might happen were we to lose a loved one, not to death, but to the vast expanse of the world, is embodied in *Lion* one of the nine Best Picture nominees for the Academy Awards this year.



**MUST SEE**  
Sophia Pande

Based on the extraordinary true story of Saroo Brierley, the film is about how a very young Saroo (played by the gifted Sunny Pawar), who can't be more than five years old, loses his way in a train station when he tags along with his older brother Guddu (Abhishek Bharate) who is just about old enough to add to the income of his extremely impoverished family which consists of the two boys, a younger sister, and their very young mother Kamla (played by the luminous

Priyanka Bose) who works at a stone quarry to help eke out the family's existence in a small one room shack.

In an incredibly unfortunate sequence of events that lead to Saroo's separation from his family, the little boy, after being separated from his brother at a train station fairly close to home, wanders around and falls asleep on an empty train that is bound for Kolkata, hundreds of miles away from his hometown. The tiny boy goes through a number of nerve-wracking encounters, but finally ends up in an orphanage where a very well put together Bengali lady sets him on a path to adoption claiming that, despite umerous newspaper adds, no one has come forward to claim Saroo - perhaps believable considering that the child was then too young to realise just how far across India he had come.

Years later, after Saroo's adoption into a wonderful home

**HAPPENINGS**



RSS

**POWER-FUL MAN:** Home Minister Bimalendra Nidhi felicitates NEA Chief Kulman Ghising during the closing ceremony of Nepal Infrastructure Summit on Monday.



ARMY HEADQUARTERS

**CHINA SYNDROME:** COAS Gen Rajendra Chhetri poses with a 15-member Chinese delegation led by DCOS Maj Gen Zhao Jinsong of the People's Liberation Army at Army Headquarters on Sunday.



GOPEN RAI

**VOTE OF CONFIDENCE:** Former Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa casts his vote during the general convention of his RPP last week. He was elected the party's new president.



NAVESH CHITRAKAR

**ALWAYS PREPARED:** Nepal Army copmmandos rehearse anti-terrorism exercises on Thursday at Tudikhel for Army Day on Friday.



SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

**ART IN THE OPEN:** An artist paints a wall at Patan Dhoka on Friday for the upcoming Kathmandu Triennale 24 March - 9 April in Kathmadu.

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# US envoy critical of CSO Act



US EMBASSY

The United States ambassador to Nepal, Alaina B Teplitz in an op-ed published in *Annapurna Post* daily on Monday has strongly criticised a new draft law making it difficult for civil society organisations to register and operate in Nepal.

The draft Social Welfare and Development Act requires civil society organisations (CSOs) to get multiple approvals from different agencies despite constitutional provisions for streamlined

registration and operation.

‘The new Social Welfare and Development Act currently being drafted ... appears to run counter to the constitution’s call for a single-door system requiring CSOs to obtain multiple approvals from different agencies in order to operate,’ Teplitz writes.

‘The draft Act also restricts CSO access to foreign funding by requiring CSOs to obtain permission from the Social Welfare

Council to implement projects using foreign aid and support.’

The US government through its agencies and contractors support NGOs in health, education and gender as well as provide grants to civil society groups working on human rights and democracy. Teplitz said the US engaged with CSOs in Nepal so they had the tools and skills to advocate on behalf of the people they serve.

She warned that the restrictions on foreign funding in the draft ‘besides being an unnecessary burden on these institutions ... would be a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights’.

‘While civil society, including our friends in the media, can, at times, be difficult or a challenge to the government, that is precisely why our democracy needs them, and why we work with other democratic governments to enhance civil society,’ she adds.

Civil society organisations include NGOs, the media, community-based groups, think tanks, academia and professional institutions. Teplitz writes: ‘It is imperative that during the democratic transition civic space remain open to support an active civil society.’



Sack: Ban on 20-year-old vehicles.

नेपाल

Rabindra in *Nepal*, 19 February

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Your mentality that you have a monopoly over the Madhes is the problem. If you have the guts, take part in elections. You will then know where you stand.”

Social activist and UML supporter Arbind Singh on Twitter from Birganj referring to Madhesi parties’ threat to boycott elections.

# Rhino deaths

Shiva Puri in *Kantipur*, 21 February

कान्तिपुर

Recently, the Chitwan National Park invited Forest Minister Shankar Bhandari for a function to mark 1,000 days with zero-poaching of the endangered one-horned rhino. A billboard was erected to commemorate the achievement.

However, on that very day a rhino had been found dead in Gaidakot of Nawalparasi. It’s horn was intact, which meant it wasn’t poached, but officials believe it had been killed by electrified



KUNDA DIXIT

fences put up by farmers to protect their crops.

Rhinos may not be poached any more, but many have been electrocuted, or have been poisoned by farmers. Out of the 25 wildlife fatalities last year, 15 were rhinos, 14 of which died in the last 6 months alone. Three of them were killed either due to poisoning or electrocution, and two more were killed this year due to the same reason. Others died of natural causes like being gored by other rhinos, while giving birth, or in tiger attacks.

Rhinos entering farms in the buffer zone have prompted farmers to set up traps, electric fences and even poison baits. While the national park is now safe from poachers, the lack of water and grasslands are driving rhinos outside the park where they come in conflict with humans.

The Chitwan National Park spends Rs 120 million for public awareness about wildlife conservation. Traffickers are fined up to Rs 50,000 or jailed for up to 15 years, however poachers are rarely caught.



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# The real truth about the Truth



**GATHERING DUST:** The TRC meeting room has remained unused and is gathering dust since its tenure was extended on 9 February. The nameplate of TRC Chair Surya Kiran Gurung (*right*) shows he is out.

OMASTHARAI

Nepal's transitional justice process was delayed, now it is doomed

OM ASTHA RAI

After the extension of the tenure of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) two weeks ago, its Chair Surya Kiran Gurung has all but vanished from public sight. Three days after the government gave a year to the

term of the TRC Gurung appeared in one event in Kathmandu to mark the death anniversary of Reena Rasaili, allegedly raped and killed by Nepal Army soldiers in Kavre, and has not been seen again. Later that week, Gurung was invited to the death anniversary of Ganesh Chilwal, who was slain by Maoist guerrillas. He did not attend. Rasaili and Chilwal were

killed by opposing forces in the same week of February in 2004. Rasaili, then 18, was found dead near her home, and the Army claimed she was killed in battle, but her family still maintains it was an extra-judicial killing. As Chair of the Maoist Victims' Association, Chilwal had been burning effigies of Maoist leaders in Kathmandu and was gunned down by two guerrillas on 15 February 2004. As Chair of the TRC, Gurung would have been expected to attend either both or neither of these two anniversaries. But it is an indication of the polarisation in the human rights and justice sphere in Nepal that he attended just the one that favoured the ruling Maoist party.

"We felt humiliated," said Gopal Bahadur Shah, a Maoist victim who helped organise Chilwal's death anniversary. "The TRC Chair should not have attended a memorial to a Maoist suspect if he did not have time for a Maoist victim." Although Gurung was brought in to head the TRC because of his supposed neutrality, his impartiality has lately been called into question. Last year when TRC members visited Madi of Chitwan where 38 villagers were killed when Maoists bombed a bus in 2005, Gurung asked the victims: "Is it not true that there were some soldiers in the bus?" TRC member Madhavi

## Legitimate questions

Apart from the internal stand-off, the TRC is struggling for legitimacy. Relatives of war victims question its credibility because it is composed of political appointees. The United Nations and international human rights organisations did not recognise the TRC because of its law that contained provisions for blanket pardon. After the Supreme Court ruled last year that amnesty cannot be granted to perpetrators of gross violations of human rights, the government is amending the TRC law. However, there is still a suspicion that the amended TRC law may have its own definition of gross human rights violations. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's statement that Nepal's transitional justice will be 'unique' has also fueled suspicion that perpetrators of gross violations of human rights will get amnesty. Dahal assured UN resident coordinator Valerie Julliard last week that Nepal will comply with international laws, but sources at the meeting told *Nepali Times* the UN delegates were not convinced. Says former Attorney General Hari Phuyal: "The draft of the amended TRC law has not yet been shared with stakeholders and experts. It would be wise to consult them before passing the amended law."

## 58,000 complaints

The only significant accomplishment of the TRC in its first two years has been to collect complaints from conflict victims. It received over 58,000 of them in the past year, and is seeking more time to investigate them. However, instead of starting to probe them the TRC is mired in an internal strife, and files of war-time atrocities are gathering dust inside 24 steel lockers (*right*). Last week, a fire in the TRC premises nearly spread to the files prompting the TRC secretariat to instruct staff to turn off all electric equipment when not in use. "The longer we take to investigate these cases, the greater the risk is to these files," TRC member Madhavi Bhatta told us. "There is no one to guard these important files. Anyone can come into our office, set the files on fire and flee." The TRC secretariat has since sought police protection, but some of the complaints are against the police themselves.





# Commission

## Disappeared

The TRC was born with a twin: the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP). Though formed through the same controversial law, the CIEDP has been able to engage the National Network of the Families of the Missing and Disappeared (NEFAD) in preparing a manual to exhume mass graves – the first major step in the investigation of the 3,400 complaints of enforced disappearances.

“Despite our objections to the TRC law, we decided to support the commission because most of the families of disappeared are more concerned about reparation, and less about punishment for perpetrators,” says NEFAD President Ram Bhandari.

The international community has refused to support the TRC unless its law is amended in compliance with international conventions of human rights. But the International Committee of the Red Cross has provided a facilitator for the Forensic Coordination Committee of the CIEDP.

Immediately after its tenure was extended, the CIEDP has put out its annual plan, beginning in April to exhume human remains and interrogating alleged perpetrators including Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his coalition partner Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Activists argue that the reason the CIEDP is making more progress than the TRC is because most of the victims were disappeared by state security, and it is the Maoists calling the shots now. They say the CIEDP would be toothless in the absence of a law that criminalises enforced disappearances.

Says Charan Prasai of the Accountability Watch Committee: “The best thing this commission might do is to name people behind enforced disappearances, but they will not get punished because disappearance has not been criminalised yet.”



GOPEN RAI

Bhatta had objected to Gurung’s question because it implied that the terrorist attack was justified. The rift between Bhatta and Gurung grew, and had become irreconcilable by the time the TRC’s mandate was about to expire earlier this month.

Gurung wanted a commitment from the government to amend the Enforced Disappearances, Truth and Reconciliation Act 2014 and more autonomy before asking for an extension. Bhatta thought Gurung was waffling, and never pushed for justice during the last two years.

Many felt Gurung was under the sway of Shree Krishna Subedi, another TRC member handpicked by the Maoists who had earlier defended Maoist leader Agni Sapkota in the Arjun Lama murder case before being appointed as a TRC member. Subedi did press for a stronger law to investigate war-time atrocities, but also argued that the TRC should just forward them to the National Human Rights Commission.

Bhatta accused Subedi of conspiring to sabotage the TRC, and blamed Gurung for not putting his foot down. Sources said she got Sher Bahadur Deuba to call Gurung and rebuke him for not pursuing cases in which the Maoists were implicated.

Gurung felt humiliated, and stopped coming to office. His deputy Lila Udasi is also on leave.

Of the five TRC members, only Bhatta, Subedi and Manchala Jha have been attending the office in Babar Mahal since the TRC was extended on 9 February.

Gurung is said to have met Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and threatened to resign if Bhatta was not sacked. Dahal has promised to form a committee led by a former Chief Justice to probe allegations against her – a prerequisite for removal.

Bhatta herself is sure to move the court if she is fired, and Gurung is likely to resign if she stays. Either way, the TRC is doomed by the conflicting interests of the two former enemies who are now partners in the coalition government.

Gurung has failed to reconcile partisan interests in the TRC even though he himself is said to have political axes to grind. He was previously close to the NC, but the Maoists were convinced that he would not single them out.

The international community has muted its criticism of Nepal’s delayed and flawed transitional justice process reportedly because they still hope that Gurung can salvage the TRC.

“If this TRC fails, it will take years to form another one, and justice for conflict victims will be further delayed,” says Hari Phuyal, an expert in transitional justice. “So the problem of politicisation has to be resolved.”

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# Let's have more amb-ass-odours

The Cabinet erupted into spontaneous applause on Thursday as the Prime Minister proposed a toast. No, it wasn't to celebrate the end of the strike by fuel tankers after they were allowed to continue cheating the Nepal Oil Corruption. Rather, it was to celebrate an all-party consensus to ban alcohol at all public

functions with immediate effect. Bottles of scotch were cracked open and the wine flowed freely at the PMO as jubilant members of the coalition raised their glasses to salute the rare and remarkable occasion in which leaders laid aside their deep partisan differences to come together on a matter of grave public interest.

"The agreement to ban booze shows that when it comes to human health (hic!) this government will leave no stone overturned or upside down, and we will work across party lines to have another party," government spokesman Comrade Partha Chetri told reporters with a noticeable slur. Suitably lubricated, the

Cabinet then dived right into the next point on the agenda which wasn't to amend the constitution to convince dissident Madhesi parties to agree to local elections in April, but to nominate new Nepali Ambassador Extraordinaries and Plenipotentiaries to various countries around the world. Because there are more

ambassadorial aspirants than there are nation states and territories in the world, things got a bit heated. The Honourable Ministers first started addressing each other with words that begin with the letter "Mu" and sound like a Japanese designer store, the name of which we cannot utter here because we are within earshot of minors. The name-calling soon turned into a fist-fight between political parties claiming plum ambassadorial posts, while factions within some parties wrestled each other and nearly defenestrated rivals vying for vacant embassy slots. Finally, in the national interest, two female candidates heading recruitment companies for overseas contract workers were selected for UAE and Oman. It is an indication of the importance Nepal places on female empowerment that women head manpower agencies. This is proof that we do not believe in tokenism, we believe in hard cash. We honour womanpower agencies by nominating them ambassadors to countries where they have valuable clients. The Cabinet also decided that since since it was difficult to accommodate all political appointees from the 8 coalition partners and various factions therein for ambassadorships, Nepal would henceforth send envoys to all 195 countries in the world. (It would have been 196 countries, but we cannot send an ambassador to Taiwan because of our strict adherence to the One China Policy.) The Prime Minister, however, is in an awkward position because he feels that even after we have opened embassies in both São Tomé and Príncipe thinking they were two countries, there are still comrades who insist on diplomatic postings. So, he has hit upon a brilliant idea to appoint the remaining as Nepal's Chargé d'affaires ad Interim to the Moon, Mars, Venus and some of the larger rocks in the Asteroid Belt. If this goes on, we may have to venture even further afield — even outside the solar system. The discovery this week of seven new planets orbiting a sun 44 light years away could be considered for opening new Nepali embassies. We can then just blast into space potential plenipotentiaries like the Ass.



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