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JIYALAL SAH

Future-proof vote

Nepalis turned out in large numbers to vote in the final phase of the final elections Thursday that marked the end of a post-war transition that lasted 11 years. Everywhere, voters said they hoped for a stable and prosperous Nepal. Some prayed at the ballot box after casting their vote, other mothers like this one in Birganj on Thursday (*above*) brought along their babies to drive home the point that they were voting for a brighter future.

Despite the cold, a busy harvest season, and some threats of violence, the average turnout touched 65% in the second phase of parliamentary and provincial elections in 45 hill and Tarai districts. With the last of three tiers of

elections now done, the Constitution of a federal, secular and democratic republic is now operational.

Despite widespread criticism for having squandered the gains of repeated struggles to restore democracy, and for prolonging the transition, ageing leaders from the three main parties deserve some credit for having brought the country to this historic crossroad. Fourth-time prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has partially redeemed himself by pushing through with the elections against all odds.

Gagan Thapa, idolised by many as the future face of Nepali politics, posed for a photo with his daughters before going to vote, and shared it on social media with a caption: "My resolve is to handover a prosperous Nepal to my daughters' generation."

(See p13 for social media posts.)

Thapa, an NC candidate in Kathmandu 4, was injured in a bomb attack on Monday, and his post summed up what Nepalis voted most for (peace, prosperity and stability).

Despite the hope for a brighter future, however, many remained skeptical about change because they saw many of the same leaders of the same parties that repeatedly let voters down over the past 27 years still standing for office.

Anti-corruption maverik, Govinda KC who has been on multiple hunger strikes against the medical mafia, told us: "I don't think there will be a drastic change in the country because we are going to have the same people who betrayed the people back in office. But we know how to make irresponsible leaders responsible."

MOMENTOUS MOMENT
EDITORIAL PAGE 2

TRANSITION TIMELINE

Looking back to 21 years of war and waffling that preceded Nepal's tryst with destiny this week.

PAGE 8-9



A state of uncertain stability

Hopes are high, but the preponderance of old faces does not bode well for the future.

Voters' voices

All people want is stability so we can have development and economic growth.

PAGE 10-11

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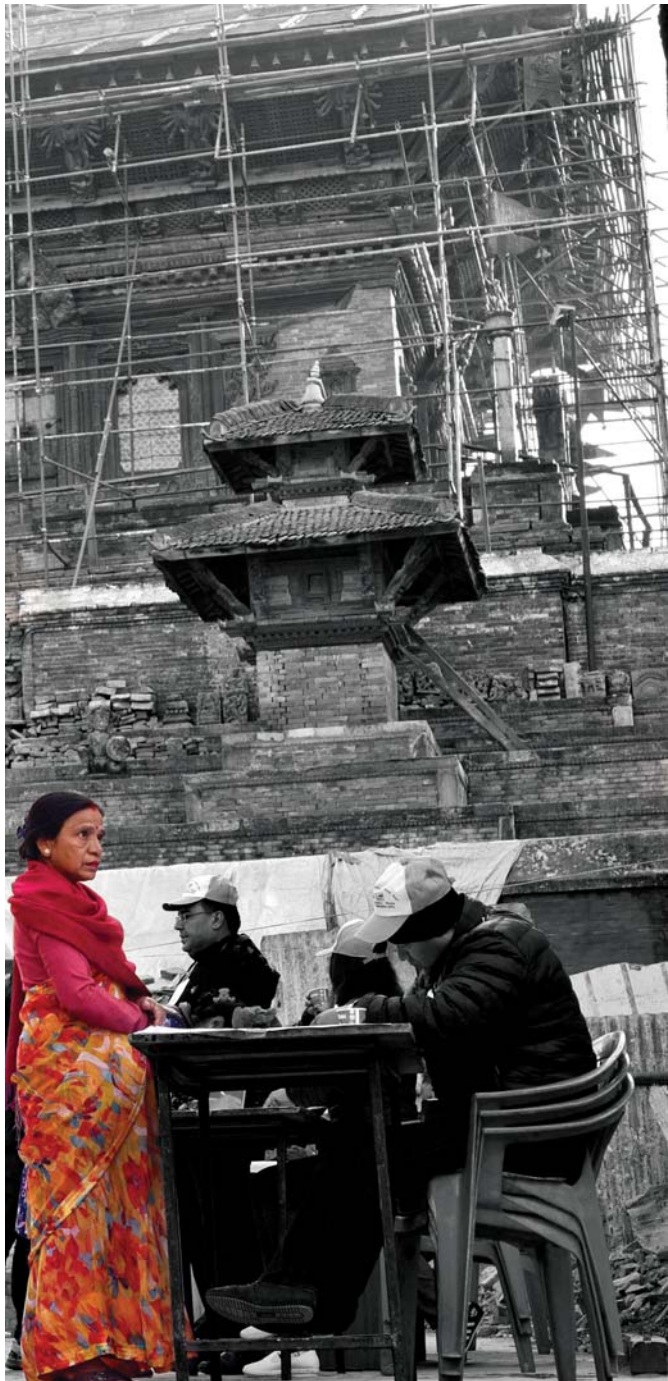
GOING PLACES TOGETHER

MOMENTOUS MOMENT

It has become an accepted truism that Nepal lost two decades to a turbulent transition. Actually, this prolonged political transition has lasted since the overthrow of the Rana oligarchy in 1950. What we have had for the past 67 years is trial-and-error politics: experimenting with a hybrid feudocracy, dabbling in parliamentary democracy, enduring a partyless absolute monarchy for 30 years, suffering a ruinous war, a monarchy-led military coup, and riding a roller coaster of coalition politics. This week marks a milestone in Nepal's political history. It is not just the end of the past ten years of war and 11 years of waffling, but an interregnum that has lasted nearly seven decades.

Time and again in that period, politicians, plutocrats and kings have taken Nepal to the brink. It was only the sacrifices of the people, their capacity to overcome oppression, their innate belief in an open society, that repeatedly pulled us back from the edge. Citizens stood up to resist as Nepal's rulers tried their best to wreck the country. It is when we look at Nepali history from the current historic vantage point that we will see just how momentous this moment is. However flawed, we now have a people's constitution that has laid down the law of the land with its core values of inclusive democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. Aside from those inalienable principles, it is a document that can be mended as we go along. Even those who were against the constitution, rose up violently against it, warned of sabotaging local and provincial elections and even threatened to secede are now taking part – albeit with a little prodding from their mentors. This signals that the constitution and these elections have not deliberately left anyone out, except a trigger-happy radical fringe of the Maoists. India's five month post-earthquake

blockade of Nepal in support of the stir led by Madhes-based parties in 2015 nearly tore the country's ethnic fabric apart by polarising hills and plains. It is true that extremism in Kathmandu's centre of power was reluctant to devolve and thought it could bulldoze through a new constitution, as it had always done. But it was also clear that the strings of the Tarai movement were being pulled from elsewhere. Geopolitical entanglement in constitution formation soon pushed Nepal northwards, making New Delhi back-pedal in the past year to 'allow' elections to go ahead. The lesson from all this is that if there hadn't been so much cross-border micro-management of our politics, perhaps things would have been sorted out much earlier. Despite the cynicism and negativity that preceded the three tiers of elections this year, we have to grudgingly admit that the last 11 years have not been completely wasted. Yes, the transition lasted longer than it need have, but the country went from war to peace, from a theocratic monarchy to a secular republic, from a centralised unitary state to one where powers are to be devolved to elected local governments. Despite the violent legacy of the war, this dramatic transformation of state structure took place relatively bloodlessly. In an age where ethnic strife and geopolitical proxy wars are tearing countries apart, Nepal must be credited for handling its political evolution in a civilised manner. The main challenge now is to fix the broken bits in the constitution, sort out knotty issues like provincial names, boundaries, their rights and responsibilities. All this so that we can finally take that big leap we have been waiting 70 years to take: ensure that decentralised and accountable decision-making by elected officials will lead to sustained development, growth with job creation, and improvements in the affordability and accessibility of schooling and medical care. It is not a far-fetched dream. It is realistic and only needs an extrapolation of the strides Nepal has taken in upgrading its Human Development Index in the past 20 years. This progress in slashing maternal mortality, doubling female literacy and halving the poverty rate have happened despite a war and paralysed politics. Image how much further we would have been if governance was more efficient and transparent. The results of these elections will be clear by next week, the new parliament will sit in mid-January, and the biggest party will have up to 40 days to form a government. Although there is great hope that the elections represent a milestone in Nepal's political history, as our report on page 10-11 shows, the fact that most of the candidates are unreformed oldies doesn't offer much hope. Federalism should have been the perfect opportunity to finally devolve Kathmandu's powers. but the low priority given to provincial candidates shows it may end up being just a rubber stamp body. Indeed, party hierarchies have dumped weaker candidates to their lineups for provincial assemblies. Whichever party gets to lead the country at least for the next three years, and whoever is the principle opposition, let them not squander this chance. There is a lot of catching up to do.



RYAN CHANG

Times.com

ONLINE PACKAGES



VOTERS' VOICES

The first provincial and parliamentary elections under the new Constitution are held. Many hope for political stability while others are skeptical that we will get a government that will work for the people and country. Watch this video to find out what Nepalis think the newly elected leaders should do for the country. Also read page 10-11.

MISLEADING
I am writing in response to your article 'Korea Kafala' (#883, Om Astha Rai). The Employment Permit System (EPS) is a strictly regulated government to government agreement ensuring transparency and prevents corruption which could occur during workforce selection and introduction process. As it bears no resemblance to the Kafala sponsorship system, I am deeply concerned that the title of the article is not only erroneous but vastly misleading to the readers. The Republic of Korea is equal to both domestic and foreign workers on the application of labor-related laws such as Labor Standards Act, Minimum Wage Act and Industrial Safety and Health Act. In case of mistreatment by employers such as labor contract violation and unfair dismissal, remedy of rights is possible through the Working Condition Improvement Department and Labor Relations Commission, Foreign workers are also eligible for Social Insurance Application which comprises of the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance, National Health Insurance and National Pension. Despite some limitations placed on changing



workplaces, foreign workers are still permitted to change workplaces up to three times during their contract period. Changing workplaces due to circumstances that fall outside the foreign worker's responsibility such as delayed wage payment, violation of contractually agreed-upon working conditions, unfair treatment, and temporary or permanent business closures are not counted towards the three times permit. In 2016 alone, 25.4% of foreign workers under the EPS applied for a change in workplace and permission was granted to 94.3% of the applicants. The Korean government has strived to reach a balance between protecting the rights of the employers that require stability and predictability in their workforce whilst also protecting the rights of the foreign workers to change their workplace. Moreover, the foreign workers are free to return to their home country at any point. The repeated use of the terms 'bonded workers' or 'slaves' in the article is therefore deeply regrettable and misleading. I welcome constructive criticism based on facts, however criticism for the sake of criticism and false condemnation only serves to damage the sincere efforts put forth by many in both our countries. Unfounded widespread criticism of the EPS may even lead to the undesirable result of decreasing the annual quota of Nepali workers.

Park Young-Sik
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea
(Full text of response is online)

WHAT'S TRENDING



Working women

by Sanjog Rai
Wherever you go in Nepal, it is never hard to find women working. *Nepali Times* readers were treated to stunning portraits, each of which told unique tales of working women the photographer found in the course of his journey through Nepal. If you missed this photo feature last week, go online to view the images and find out what inspired the artist.

- Most reached and shared on Facebook
- Most popular on Twitter
- Most visited online page



Returning to Chitwan

by Lisa Choegyal
'Tiger Tops has come and gone as the best wildlife lodge in Asia,' wrote the columnist in her So Far So Good column in *Nepali Times* after a recent visit to the jungle resort in Chitwan where she once worked. Visit nepalitimes.com to read feedback about this legendary lodge that put Nepal on the world map.

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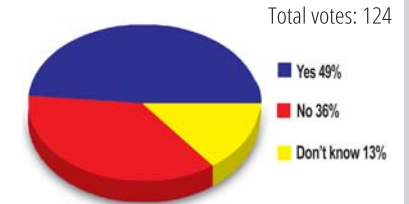
QUOTE TWEETS

- Nepali Times @nepalitimes**
Ongoing elections mark the dawn of federalism but candidates believe power will rest in Kathmandu <http://bit.ly/2AM2ooU> @shreejanas #NepalElection2017 #NepalVotes2017
- Cheryl Saunders @CherylSaunders1**
Not a good start. Consensus effort needed to make federalism effective during Constitution implementation phase
- Nepali Times @nepalitimes**
"If leaders haven't yet understood how the power centre will drift to the states, how will the people understand?" Pitambar Sharma <http://bit.ly/2AM2ooU> @shreejanas
- david seddon @pigreen**
What makes you so sure that power will become de-centralized?
- Nepali Times @nepalitimes**
'Tiger Tops has come and gone as the best wildlife lodge in Asia. Tourists now walk with elephants rather than ride them, and jungle jeeps are specially sprung and tiered,' writes Lisa Choegyal in her column So far so good. <http://bit.ly/2JyPed>
- niteshbtr @niteshbtr**
Tiger tops was a school to many



Weekly Internet Poll #886

Q. Given recent bomb blasts, do you feel safe voting in next week's elections?



Weekly Internet Poll #887
To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think this election will make Nepal politically more stable?



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JYALAL SAH

Fasten seat belts

Brace yourselves for a ride into uncharted constitutional territory

Nepal's descent into Hades in the democratic era began in 1995 when the fringe party that was the CPN-Maoist lifted arms against a democratic system that was barely five years old. This



downward spiralling continued through a series of disasters and debacles – the Narayanhiti massacre, Gyanendra's coup, the

interminability of constitution making, the April 2015 earthquake, the Indian Blockade and the Lokman Singh Karki interlude followed by the attempt to impeach the Chief Justice.

But the Constitution is written, and the last hurdle to begin its implementation in earnest was the final phase of elections on Thursday. We got here despite the dark forces – national and international – seeking to sabotage firstly the writing of the Constitution, then the holding of local government elections, then the national/provincial. But we

got through, and some amount of credit may be given to the national political leaders who, having been handed a near-impossible task, ultimately lived up to the trust. This needs saying, for the pillorying of politicians is the easiest pastime of the pretentious intelligentsia, in Kathmandu as it is the world over.

Having pulled all levers, used guile and perseverance to get to this point, where do the people go from here? It will be foolhardy to think that it will be smooth sailing henceforth, for that never happens. We will never be above the clouds, it will always be turbulent, but

there we must strive for base-level political stability which allows economic acceleration and social progress. Right off the bat, we need to guard against those who will point to the failure of democracy and urge any one of the following – a politically active army, a Lee Kwan Yew strongman figure, a return of kingship, the Hindutva agenda, or another radical left lifting of arms. Meanwhile, those who seek a directly elected president should be simply asked to read the Constitution just adopted.

The path to the new Constitution's implementation

is now cleared with the full set of elections completed, but if anything we have to be even more on guard when it comes to rule of law, human rights and due process. And let us remember that the peace process is not over until the accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity is established, which will allow the process of reconciliation to proceed.

One of the bigger challenges, given the devolution of governmental powers to the grassroots by the Constitution, is development of a vibrant civil society in all seven provinces. To take just one example, given the power transfer the public is bound

to suffer human rights abuse all over the country in the absence of human rights activism.

The civil society of tomorrow will have to promote constitutional implementation and protect civil rights, but it will also have to guard against ultra-nationalism, right-wing and ultra-left populism, and identity activism that goes against the interests of the very communities sought to be protected. We have to watch out for the politicians and bureaucrats who would sabotage the constitutional devolution of powers to local entities.

But to even get started on the journey ahead, we have to ensure political stability amidst the new democracy. Indeed, today we are at more or less the same point where we were at the first elections after the 1990 changeover from the Panchayat, when the Nepali Congress and the UML went at each other like fighting dogs. The rancour exhibited during the last phase of the 2017 election campaign gives one a sense of foreboding.

The losing side is going to feel the pinch harder than in the elections to the Constituent Assembly of 2008 and 2013, and among the leadership there is going to be a great sense of loss of entitlement. The new Constitution does not allow a no-confidence motion to be brought for two years, and so there will be temptation for party/parties out of power to try extra-constitutional means to somehow bring the house down. Those out of power are bound to feel beleaguered because the 'transitional politics' of the past decade had everyone eating from the honey-pot, whether you were in government or in opposition. From the national to the local levels, the all-party mechanisms had made everyone into a fellow-traveller, but now the role of the opposition becomes paramount.

The inevitable bickering among the political parties is going to make for roller-coaster politics up ahead, but we have to try and ensure that a modicum of civility is maintained. There is a Constitution to implement, hundreds of new laws and regulations to enact under it, constitutional principles of local government to be defended, inter-community relations to be normalised, inter-relationships within the new state structure to be defined and rationalised, and a confident new foreign policy put in place, especially to tackle the two ascendant neighbours.

Political stability will allow economic growth to accelerate after all these years of hanging fire. The social justice goals that are central to the new Constitution, including inclusion and equity, must be implemented forthwith to make up for lost time. It is obvious that civil society in the seven provinces has its work cut out.

With this piece, Kanak Mani Dixit takes a temporary leave of absence from this On The Way Up column.

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The Nepali Dream

Four motivated millennials who are paving the way to socio-economic reform

For Sanobabu Sunuwar, the sky is, quite literally, not the limit. In his mid-thirties now, he was forced to drop out of school during the insurgency but went on to learn to be a white water rafting guide. Then he took up paragliding.



Even though he wasn't a trained mountaineer, his audacity and determination made him rope up with a Sherpa friend to climb Mt Everest, paraglide to the Khumbu Glacier, then kayak down the Kosi all the way to the Bay of Bengal. This extraordinary feat earned the duo the Nat Geo Adventurer of the Year Award in 2012.



But Sano Babu did not stop there. He went on to jump off six of the seven highest peaks in all continents, and now runs a paraglide training school in Sirkot of Syangja where he recently organised an international paragliding championship. He has plans to bring in the Paragliding World Cup to Nepal in 2020.



Sixit Bhatta is a dashing young man, speaks eloquently and every time I take a ride through his app based Bike Taxi Company called Tootle, I thank him. It has made living and working in Kathmandu a lot easier. Quitting a comfortable banking job, Sixit started Tootle, and brought the sharing economy home for us in Kathmandu. Tootle was recently nominated for the top ten Global Impact startups by Slush, a Finland based annual startup and tech event.



Sumana Shrestha is always creating a buzz about town. An MIT graduate with experience in a global consultancy firm, Sumana came back to Nepal because "so much needs to be done here, literally in every field, and nobody is doing it". She coordinated the Car Pool idea during the Great Indian Blockade of 2015, a social media based platform through which people could share transportation. We fought the fuel shortage together, and tech based solutions like this built a new aspect to the well-acclaimed toughness of the Nepali people. Last we worked together was for the flood victims in the Tarai, where she created platforms using the social media and the cloud to coordinate relief efforts of volunteer organisations. Sharing data and activities in real time, I could clearly see the impact of the nimbleness she had imparted to the relief effort. Last year, Sumana

was busy launching a new 'Urban Rains' skirt for bikers and launched a travel guide app this year named Bhuntu.

Sumana is inspiring not because she is tech savvy, but because of her unique attachment to things local, and her relentless effort in looking for solutions, trying to figure out what works and what doesn't at the grassroots, and her dedication to the spirit of social entrepreneurship.



Prakash Koirala is on a mission to spread financial literacy among the needy in Nepal and elsewhere. When I met him for the first time few years back, he was struggling with a dilemma. He did not want to continue with chartered accountancy that he had already put three years into, and wasn't sure what to do instead. Still in

his twenties, Prakash has created impact by training people in financial literacy.

He dropped out of the CA course, wrote a book with illustrations that explained the concepts of finance to children and everyone else lost in the world of money. Many financial institutions, INGOs and donor agencies have reached out to him to help spread financial literacy. He was invited by TedX Mumbai as a speaker this year.

Sano Babu had to drop out of school because of insurgency, Sixit is an MBA with professional experience of more than a decade, Sumana is an MIT graduate, and Prakash went to school in his native Dailekh. There are many more Nepalis like them. And although there be differences between them, there is one thing they all have in common: audacity, ambition and drive to stay and help Nepal.

The future of Nepal will be driven by the global ambition of millennials like these four extraordinary people to make the Nepali dream come true. 🇳🇵

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Thai's 50 years



Thai Airways marked its 50th anniversary in Nepal with a function at Hotel de l'Annapurna on 4 December with the Thai Ambassador in Nepal, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal and its partners.

Gokarna Golfing

Qatar Airways and Gokarna Forest Resort have once more joined up to host the



Qatar Airways Open Golf Tournament 2017 at Gokarna Golf Club 8-9 December. The tournament will be played over 18 holes with 90 golfers participating.

Prague spring



Turkish Airlines along with Sabre Nepal sent its 7 winners of their sales promotion campaign July-September 2017 on a trip to Prague with stopovers in Berlin and Istanbul to reward those with highest sales.

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Temporary protection

Under the Trump, the future looks bleak for Nepalis staying on

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Sabina Shakya was nearing completion of her Optional Practical Training, which allows international students to work in the United States for up to three years after graduation, when the 2015 earthquake struck Nepal.

The Department of Homeland Security gave Nepal Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months, allowing Nepalis who had been living in the US before June 2015 to stay and apply for work and travel permits, regardless of previous immigration status. Nepal's TPS was renewed for another 18 months in October 2016.

"For me TPS was a blessing," says Shakya, who is currently a program officer at a nonprofit in Manhattan. "It helped me stay on in the US, find a job and gain work experience that I would not have been able to get otherwise."

Nearly 15,000 Nepalis had received TPS as of October, according to a Congressional Research Service report. Some like Shakya

came to the US legally as students, and were struggling to obtain work visas. Many others are undocumented, having overstayed their visas or crossed the border illegally from Mexico.

"TPS has benefited thousands of Nepalis who were out of status," says Narbada Chhetri, director of organising and advocacy at Adhikaar, a New York City-based nonprofit that campaigned for the extension of TPS for Nepal. "Many are individuals living here for over 10-15 years and are here because they want better lives for their children and their families."

Mona Lama, 49, came to the United States on a tourist visa with her husband in 2005. While he returned home to Kathmandu soon after to take care of their two daughters, Lama stayed behind, becoming an undocumented immigrant. For 12 years she lived in constant fear of being detained by immigration authorities.

"Every time I saw a cop on the subway or on the streets, I'd start panicking," recalls Lama, who works as a nanny in New York City. "I'd think they had come to get me and that I'd be immediately deported."

Despite the uncertainty she had no other

choice since she is the main support for her family back home. Her husband's trekking business suffered during the conflict and eventually shut down.

"The situation at the time was very bad," says Lama. "There was nothing I could do there to be able to provide sufficiently for my family."

Lama applied for TPS with assistance from staff members at Adhikaar in 2015. After her application was approved, she says, she applied for health insurance and work and travel permits.

"For the first time in 12 years, I was able to finally go to a hospital without fear," says Lama. "And that happened only because I received TPS."

But given the Trump administration's recent decisions to end the Temporary Protected Status program for over 58,000 Haitians and 5,000 Nicaraguans, there's now concern in the Nepali community about the possibility of TPS extension for Nepal.

Nepal's TPS expires in June 2018 and if it is not renewed, tens of thousands of Nepalis will have to go back within a given time period (usually between 6-18 months) or face deportation.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME: (From left to right) Mona Lama in Nepal with her daughters and husband, at the day care in New York where she now works, and her grown up daughters in America.

Sabina Shakya (right) could stay on in the US to gain work experience after her college studies.

But both Lama and Shakya are among 15,000 Nepalis in the US who benefited from the TPS scheme, and may now have to return to Nepal.

"Looking at Haiti, it seems like they're planning to end Temporary Protected Status for all countries," says Pabitra Khatu Benjamin of Adhikaar. "But it's hard to read the mind of the Trump administration. The way they make their decisions doesn't often have a logical course."

The decision rests on the Department of Homeland Security's evaluation of current conditions in Nepal, including factors such as political instability, slow recovery and other recent natural disasters, while assessing the conditions.

Benjamin says her organisation will be actively campaigning for the program's renewal and sees a small hope in the fact that Nepal has had TPS for only three years as compared to other TPS recipient countries that have enjoyed the protection for much longer. Mona Lama, who was hoping to visit her family, whom she hasn't seen in 12 years, in February is now rethinking her plans. "I had high hopes of seeing my family, spending time with them," she says, "now that things are so uncertain here, I won't be able to. It's heartbreaking." 🇳🇵



KUNDA DIXIT



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The subcontinent was first battered by Cyclone Ockhi from the Arabian Sea, and is currently being threatened by a depression in the Bay of Bengal. Ockhi rode the fast westerlies to bring some drizzles and snow to Nepal on Tuesday morning. Clouds on the outer fringes of the Bay low pressure circulation will just graze Kathmandu, and may bring some precipitation to the higher reaches over the weekend. But fast on the heels of these systems, there is an approaching westerly front currently over Iran that will bring winter rain and snow to central Nepal early next week.

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The Kathmandu Chorale turns 35

“A collective friendship built upon the love of music and globalisation at its best.”

Every Monday evening for the past three decades or more, music lovers from across the Valley gather in a Dhobi Ghat school to practice Western chorale music. It is a weekly highlight for singers like American psychiatrist Nadine Rogers.

She says: “Whatever has happened during the day, no matter how tired I am, when I go to choir it lifts my spirits. Creating something beautiful together with others can be a transcendent experience.”

The Kathmandu Chorale turns 35 this year, braving revolutions, strikes, blockades, blackouts and even the occasional gunfire nearby to hold weekly practice and twice-yearly concerts.

When Kareen Messerschmidt (pictured below, right) invited a small group of singers to her house in Patan in 1982, she may not have imagined that the chorale would go on for so long. “Our home was the only place I knew of with a good piano as I had brought a small upright with me,” recalls Kareen about the early days when it was just her husband and United Mission to Nepal staff.

Each year brought in new members, including Europeans with their grand traditional music background with the ability to sight-read most everything. The choir at first accompanied a concert pianist, Cynthia Hale, a UMN doctor based at Am Pipal hospital in Gorkha who moved to Kathmandu in 1982.

Soon the home became too small. Fr Moran from St Xavier’s School and artist Lain Singh Bangdel helped to find venues to practice and perform. Rehearsals took place at Lincoln School, The British Library and even at the British Embassy. The concerts were



held at St Mary’s auditorium.

One early challenge was that some members were stationed outside of Kathmandu, and Kareen’s solution was to tape everyone’s part with the help of an audio technician from the French embassy, while she banged on the piano their part over a recording in the background.

The chorale brought a mix of classics to Kathmandu, including Mozart’s Requiem, Handel’s Messiah and Robert Shaw’s American folk songs. Kareen was followed by 15 conductors one of whom was Dutch musician Annette Donker. When she slipped in the bathroom after promising to replace Norma Kehrberg as conductor in



1994 and broke both wrists she found a creative solution: a tuning fork to tap the beat with one plastered hand on the other.

Another long term conductor was American Bryan Varenkamp whose program included Beatles medleys and popular musicals, which attracted many young singers. Lincoln School teacher Katie Lenoue replaced him in 2011 and this month travels back to Nepal to perform a Christmas song with the chorale.

US music teacher Iris Kolodjitook over from Hannah Dornon earlier this year. The 35th anniversary concert on Saturday 9 December will be her first conductor role in Nepal. “I feel grateful to lead such a well-established group,” she says.

Much has changed since 1982, but many things remain the same: the members pay a membership fee for expenses and during the free concerts, donations are collected for charities. Members are an eclectic mix from various nationalities and backgrounds. Expat get a taste of home, and the choir introduces Nepali singers to Western chorale music.

Says Nadine Rogers, whose composition *Winter Hymn* will be premiered in Saturday’s concert: “The chorale is an amazing opportunity to meet people from across the globe. It is a collective friendship built upon the love of music and globalisation at its best.” 🇳🇵

Lucia de Vries

*The Kathmandu Chorale
35th Anniversary Concert
Saturday, 9 December 3:30pm and 6pm
KISC Jhamsikhel (new location)*

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Bullet to ballot

After 21 years of war and wilderness Nepal finally looks to future stability by holding three elections in one year

SANTA GAHA MAGAR

When the Maoists launched their armed struggle to topple the Nepali state in February 1996, the country had just reclaimed democracy from an autocratic monarchy.

What followed was a decade of bloodshed, and another decade of turbulent transition to a federal and secular republic.

This week, Nepal has finally ended its painfully protracted political transition by holding the last phase of parliamentary and provincial elections. Earlier this year, the first local government elections since 1997 were also held.

Nepal's political roller coaster actually began during the conflict when a group of mainstream parliamentary parties and the underground Maoists joined hands in New Delhi to launch a non-violent pro-democracy movement in November 2005. The street protests escalated and what the Maoists couldn't achieve with ten years of war and 17,000 deaths, was attained in 19 days of a relatively peaceful people's movement.

But in Nepal, fighting for democracy has always been easier than making it work. A ceasefire came into effect, an interim constitution paved the way for elections and the first Constituent Assembly (CA) voted to abolish the monarchy in 2008. But the CA soon got bogged down in a polarised debate about the kind of federalism. When the second CA finally promulgated the new Constitution in September 2015, Nepal was one step closer to ending its transition.

Today, there is disagreement about whether the transition began after the abolition of the monarchy, or much longer ago – after the fall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950 (*See Editorial, page 2*).

As two communist parties that have forged an electoral alliance and aim to unify themselves after polls are expected to




GOPEN RAI

win a majority, the hopes of most Nepalis is foremost for stability, a prerequisite for development and growth (*See pages 10-11*). Two Tarai-centric parties were left out of the Constitution writing process, and they are yet to own this document wholeheartedly.

They were threatening to disrupt elections in the plains until a few months ago. But they eventually took part not just in local but also parliamentary and provincial elections, which is a positive signal for a more stable future. However, there are still many unknowns. The main leaders of the parties are the same ones who stoked the flames of instability in the past, and there are still lots of issues to sort out about the new provinces. And then there is regional geopolitics, and the competing interests of India and China.

A decade after the end of their war, the Maoists have become a part of the system they wanted to overthrow. The federal Parliament for which Nepalis have voted last week and this week may have devolved some of its power to provincial assemblies, but it is still the same bourgeois system erstwhile rebels despised.

The United People's Front, the political wing of the Maoists, had emerged as the third largest party in the first parliament under the new Constitution in 1993 with more than 350,000 votes. Three years later, when the mid-term election was held, they did not win a single seat, and only 100,000 votes. That electoral loss drove the Maoists to wage an armed struggle against the state, and they dragged the country into war. They harked back to an obsolete ideology as a crafty way to justify the violence. A radical fringe of the Maoists still doesn't believe in parliamentary democracy and tried to disrupt this year's elections with violence.

Aside from these challenges, it is safe to assume that come January Nepal will enter a new age. Hopefully, stability will improve governance, encourage investment and allow Nepal to finally take a leap forward. 



13 February 1996

The Maoists launch their armed struggle, marking the start of a war that lasted 10 years and killed 17,000.



7 October 1997

Chand is replaced by RPP leader Surya Bahadur Thapa who becomes Prime Minister for the fourth time with backing from the NC.

12 March 1997

In era of unstable coalition politics, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) leader Lokendra Bahadur Chand becomes Prime Minister with backing from the UML.

Local Election 1997

The UML swept local elections for VDC and DDC councils. Mired in conflict and instability, Nepal would not see local polls for another 20 years.

12 April 1998

Despite its acronym standing for 'Unified' Marxist-Leninist, the UML splits. Bam Dev Gautam sets up the rump CPN-ML.

15 April 1998

In another coalition reshuffle, Thapa is replaced by Girija Prasad Koirala of the NC as Prime Minister.



3-17 May 1999

Parliamentary elections held. The NC wins majority and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai becomes Prime Minister.

4 October 2002

May 2002

4 June 2002

1 June 2002

20 March 2002

2002

King Gyanendra sacks Deuba saying he is "incompetent" to conduct general elections, and brings in Lokendra Bahadur Chand of the RPP once again.

2002

Chronic infighting leads to a split in the NC. Sher Bahadur Deuba forms the Nepali Congress (Democratic).

2002

PM Deuba dissolves the House of Representatives.

2001

26 July 2001
The NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba becomes Prime Minister.

2001

Dipendra declared king even though he is in a coma. Once he dies, Gyanendra Shah becomes Nepal's third king in four days. He would also be the last.

2001

Crown Prince Dipendra kills nine members of the royal family and turns the gun on himself.

2000

As a result of intense infighting within the NC, Girija Prasad Koirala replaces Bhattarai as Prime Minister.

5 June 2003

Within a year, Gyanendra again replaces Chand with Rastriya Janashakti Party's Surya Bahadur Thapa who becomes Prime Minister for the fifth time.

3 June 2004



Gyanendra's game of musical chairs continues with Thapa replaced once more by Sher Bahadur Deuba.



31 August 2004
Islamic militants killed 12 Nepali migrant workers in Iraq. Politicians back home used it to stage protests that soon escalated into an organised anti-Muslim pogrom.

1 February 2005

King gets the Army to stage a coup and removes Deuba, assumes direct power. Information blackout and censorship of media.



6 June 2005
Maoists blew up a bus in Chitwan killing 38 passengers.

24 April 2006

King Gyanendra addresses the nation near midnight, restoring parliament. Street protests end after 19 days.

6 April 2006

The seven party alliance along with the underground Maoists launch a pro-democracy movement against the Gyanendra regime.

28 May 2008



31 July 2008
After much wheeling dealing and backstabbing between parties, Ram Baran Yadav becomes the first President of Nepal.



15 January 2007



10 April 2008
Constituent Assembly elections held. Maoists emerge as the biggest party.

Nepal's Interim Constitution promulgated.



21 November 2006
The Maoists and the government sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, officially ending the decade-long conflict.



4 May 2009

PM Dahal resigns following his controversial sacking of army chief Ruknangad Katuwal.

2009



18 August 2008
The Kosi breached its embankment and flooded parts of Nepal and India, displacing 5 million in both countries.



25 April 2015
Earthquake hits central Nepal, killing almost 9,000 people.

20 September 2015

The CA promulgates the new Constitution



The UML's K.P. Oli becomes Prime Minister in coalition with the Maoists.

October November 2015

Unhappy with the constitution, India blockades Nepal, devastating the economy and hindering earthquake relief.

28 October 2015



The UML's Bidya Devi Bhandari nominated second President of Nepal.

3 August 2016

Pushpa Kamal Dahal becomes Prime Minister, promising to hand over to Deuba of NC within 9 months.



11-14 August 2017
Devastating monsoon floods and landslides kill dozens and affect 20% of Nepal's population living in the eastern plains.

14 May-18 September 2017
Local elections held

26 November-7 December 2017
Provincial and Parliamentary elections held



Unable to finalise the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly is dissolved.

27 May 2012

Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai becomes Prime Minister



18 June 2012
The Maoist party splits as Mohan Baidya breaks away.

The UML's Jhala Nath Khanal takes his turn as Prime Minister.

6 February 2011

The Karnali Highway linking Surkhet with Jumla inaugurated. For the first time, Nepal's remotest region is linked to the rest of the country.

A ceasefire comes into effect as the NC's Girija Prasad Koirala becomes Prime Minister of a transitional government, dissolved parliament reinstated.





DINESH SHRESTHA

Into a state

OM ASTHA RAI

After the last phase of elections to three levels of government under the new Constitution on Thursday, the question on most voters' minds is not who will win. It is whether the new government structure can ensure political stability.

The Election Commission hopes to wrap up vote counting in just over a week, and we will know whether the Left Block or Democratic Alliance has a higher combined score.

Whoever wins, the new government will be keenly watched to see if it behaves any differently from the political cartel of the past, whether Kathmandu will really devolve power, and if that sets Nepal on a path to development, job creation and prosperity.

A lot will depend on what kind of majority the winning alliance gets, whether it will bring the same old politicians into government, how intense the inter- and intra-party rivalry will be in the coming years, and of course how much geopolitics will play a part in making and breaking coalitions.

Nepal has ended an excruciatingly long constitutional transition to a federal, secular and democratic republic by voting for central, provincial and local governments. But that may not necessarily translate into political stability.

The Left Alliance of the UML and the Maoists has promised a



stable government for at least five coming years if it wins. It certainly has an edge over the Democratic Alliance led by the NC, and is likely to get a majority.

According to the new Constitution, the opposition cannot bring down the government through a no-confidence vote for at least two years. And if that motion fails, another no-confidence proposal cannot be tabled for a year. This provision was inserted into the new Constitution to ensure political stability.

But Bipin Adhikari, an expert

“Making irresponsible

SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

More than 4.4 million Nepalis have left the country for foreign employment since the war ended in 2006. Those who stayed back have waited most of their lives for stable politics to create jobs at home. As voting finally ended on Thursday for three tiers of government under a new constitution, the fervent hope of most Nepalis is for a stable government to guarantee economic growth. However, there is dismay that the same old politicians may be elected again so that they can misbehave like they always have.

Nepali Times interviewed a cross section of voters about what they hope from newly elected leaders, and how the new Parliament should conduct itself.



SAURABH JYOTI
Businessman

The peaceful entrance of Maoists into multiparty democracy was a great achievement of our peace process. Now we are in the final phase of the transition. With these elections I am very hopeful there will be political stability because we will have a government at least for five years. Power will also be decentralised to provincial governments. I hope this will lead to more even development throughout the country.



PAWANA SHRESTHA
General Manager Nepal, Etihad Airways

I am very excited about the provincial and parliamentary elections. I believe the formation of a new Parliament will bring more stability to the country. We can see the new voices and parties with strong determination and commitment. This will help other leaders to be more accountable and responsible. When we have a responsible new government we can actually focus on infrastructure development and tourism development.



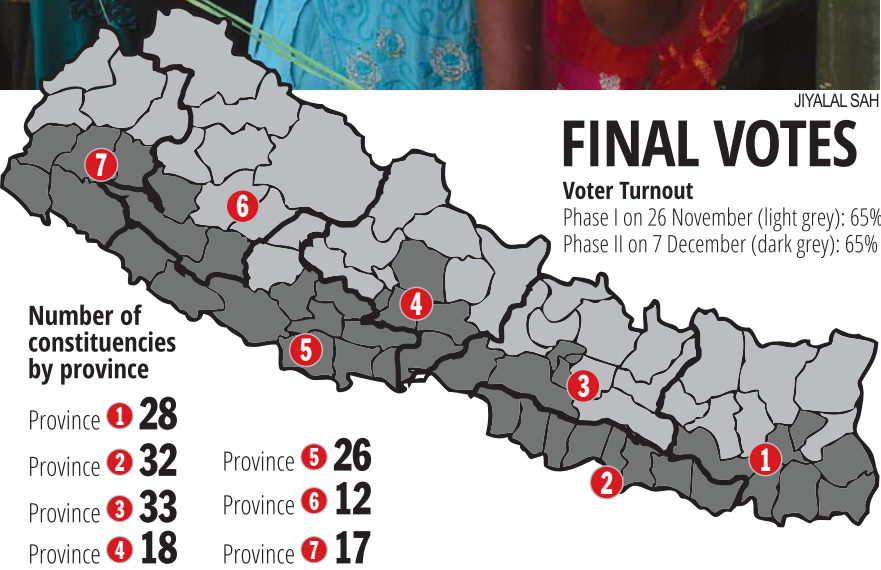
GOVINDA K C
Surgeon, Teaching Hospital

To be very honest I don't think there will be a drastic change in the country after the elections because we are going to have the same faces that we had for many years. The leaders who betrayed the people will continue to serve in the government. The chance of having new faces in Parliament is very slim. But we know how to make the irresponsible leaders responsible towards the people and the country. We will do it.

of uncertain stability



JYALAL SAH



on constitutional law, says that useful as it may be, the rule may not guarantee stability: "It is just a constitutional experiment, and we are yet to see whether it works in our favour."

Adhikari says the grounds on which ideologically opposed political parties have forged electoral alliances are very shaky, and these coalitions could collapse at any time. "Theoretically, we have found a remedy for our perennial political instability," he explains, "but practically, it is still difficult."

If a single party fails to win a majority, and forms the government



with the backing of one or two other parties, governments will still be fragile. The Constitution restricts the opposition from registering a no-confidence vote for two years, but does not bar coalition partners from pulling out.

Nepal has been ruled by a triumvirate of three main parties and a plethora of fringe parties, and the possibility of a single party winning is slim. The UML and the Maoists have said they will unite after elections, but they may change their minds if they do not get the desired results jointly and separately.

Indu Shekhar Mishra, a professor of political science in Birganj, says: "If the Maoists could ditch the UML to lead the new government with the NC's support in the past, they can do the same again. They may just be bargaining for a more lucrative deal."

Mishra sees little chance of stability because the political leaders are the same greedy ones whose short-sightedness was the underlying cause of instability in the past. 🇳🇵

New PM: who, when and how?

Vote counting may be over in a week, but the process of forming a new government will start only when the new Parliament gets full shape in January.

The Election Commission (EC) will finish counting votes under the First Past the Post (FPTP) system by 10 December, and the Proportional Representation (PR) votes by 14 December. But the EC will require at least three more weeks to proportionally divide PR votes and disclose a list of nominated MPs, ensuring 33% participation women and inclusion of ethnic clusters like Madhesi, Dalit, Janajati and Tharu.

Only then can the process of forming the new federal government be initiated. "No matter how fast we work, the new government is possible only in January," says EC spokesperson Surya Prasad Adhikari.

If a party wins an absolute majority, its parliamentary leader will be anointed as the new Prime Minister by the President during or soon after the first meeting of the federal parliament, probably in the first week of January. If no party wins a majority, the process could drag on till end-January.

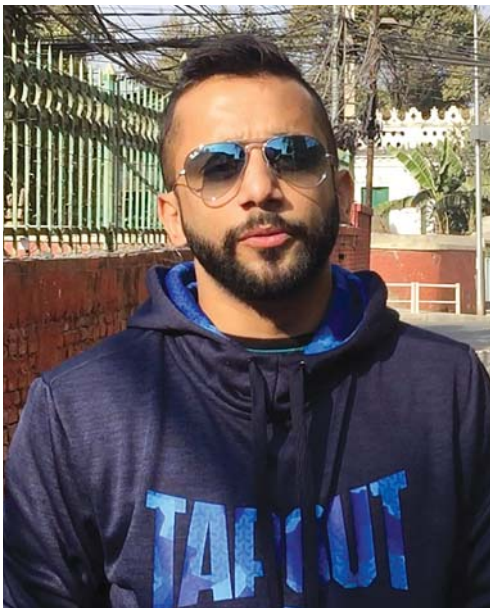
If no party secures over 50% of the 275 seats in Parliament, an MP, not necessarily from the largest party, can claim to be Prime Minister but will need to prove support from a majority of MPs from two or more parties. Else, the opportunity will go to the parliamentary leader of the largest party who also needs to show a majority in 30 days.

If the Left Alliance wins a majority, it will probably choose UML Chair KP Oli as the new Prime Minister. Maoist Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal will likely be nominated for President or be given a chance to lead the unified communist party.

If the Democratic Alliance wins, NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba will be Prime Minister for a fifth time. NC leaders Ram Chandra Poudel and Shashank Koirala have also expressed interest in leading the government, but they are unlikely to beat Deuba.

Which means whatever the winning configuration, the personalities in government will be the same people we have seen for the past 27 years.

leaders responsible"



PRITHU BASKOTA
Cricketer, Nepal National Team

These provincial and parliamentary elections carry historical importance. I am hopeful that they will bring political stability. A stable government and a new Parliament will pave a way for overall development of our country, mainly in the service sector. In addition to this, I believe that the implementation of federalism will bring positive changes in delivery of services throughout the country.



PRASHRAYA RATNA TULADHAR
Creative Director, Ads Market

This is the fourth time I am casting my vote, but I have yet to see any significant change in the country. After this election we will have a new parliament and I am hopeful that this will bring a stable government with opportunities for business and for everyone in the country. Nepal's young people will not have to migrate for work if there is a stable government.



DEEPPENDRA TONDON
Director, Business Advantage

With this election I hope that the instability that has plagued the development of Nepal for the last couple of decades is finally put behind us. I believe now the political agendas and issues will take a back seat, and we can actually concentrate on a more stable government which will lead to more economic growth and the development of Nepal.



ALL PHOTOS: SHREEJANA SHRESTHA

ANGEL LAMA
Activist LGBTI rights

We will soon have a new Parliament, and hopefully it means stable government that paves the way for development. There will be new gates opening for the LGBTI community as well.

nepalitimes.com

Go online to watch Voters' Voices, a short video featuring a cross section of Nepalis about their hopes for the future.





Stranger Things Season 2

Like my past column on the first season of Stranger Things which came out in July of last year, on Netflix, a streaming service now available in Nepal, I will not be summarising the rather complicated, multi-threaded plot of this wonderful new series. This is because the real charm of Stranger Things, in both seasons, is the



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

ability of the directors, the Duffer Brothers, to create an absolutely nostalgia inducing rendition of what it was like to grow up in the 1980s, in suburbia, with the BMX bikes, the 80s synth music, the video game booths, and all that was so great about that time, including the Spielberg films that this series harks back to, mixed in with a healthy dose of the uncanny and bizarre, and a combination of both

science and horror and wonder that caught even the adults, but mostly the children, in a thrilling, chilling time for cinema.


Luckily, while the Duffers (terrible name, great talent) are great at recreation and emulation, they are also able to take a genre approach and transcend it, introducing characters that are archetypal but also deeply original, in both personality and humour, making for a great ensemble cast that practically runs with these odd stories, so much so that we can feel their glee at working with some of the richest source material around on television today.

Stranger Things' second season comes back once again to the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana. This small, tightly knit town was torn apart in the first season by the mysterious appearance of one strange little girl, and the disappearance of a few other children who went missing under deeply disturbing circumstances that are designed to

freak out even the most cynical of adults, so chilling is the hinted at but yet unseen.

Suffice to say that Hawkins has a little crew of the bravest, cutest kids ever, who band together to save their missing friend, befriend the odd little girl, and save their town from a savage, completely unethical science experiment that is being conducted on their peripheries, unknown to most and hidden by the few town officials who don't quite understand the vicious intent behind the people who are so keen to experiment on children, and, of course, harness a power they do not understand.

If all this sounds 'just too vague', I will cop to it, but it is done on purpose to save the potential audience from anything that might spoil or ruin your conceptions before you reach into and get addicted to the absolutely magical space created by this series. The first season was prodigiously great; the second season is pure pleasure because we finally have the time to get to know our characters better, even as creepy things start to stir.

Winona Ryder, almost the only star among a cast of fairly unknowns, anchors this film in her comeback (of sorts) creating the 80s ethos so precious to us and the Duffer Brothers with her ethereal but earthy air that made so many films into smash hits. That aura that Ryder brings defines this fine and amazing (to the eyes and to the psyche) show that has blessedly now been renewed for a third season. Miss it at your own peril. 



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com 

HAPPENINGS



RYAN CHANG

ALMIGHTY: A woman prays at the temple of Ganesh (the god of good fortune) at Patan Dhoka on the morning of the elections on Thursday.



RYAN CHANG

BOOKWORMS: Election day may mean school is off, but that does not mean they get a holiday. Sisters Divya, 4, and Dipika Shah, 5, work on their English homework in Kathmandu on Thursday.



PAMELA LIN

DUSTY DAY: A man sweeps an alley near Bagalamukhi temple on the morning of the elections.



PAMELA LIN

YOUNG HELP: As schools remained closed, a young girl helps her family sell gwaramari on the election day.



RYAN CHANG

ON GUARD: A soldiers patrols the streets of Kathmandu early on election day Thursday.

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Election Day on social media



Gapphu Chhetri on Twitter

I watched this mother after she cast her ballot in Pokhara as she prayed over the ballot box. I was overwhelmed. She must have prayed that the party she voted for would help the next generation.



Binod Chaudhary on Twitter

Voted in Nawalparasi 1. This country will prosper in our generation with our effort.



Rabindra Mishra on Facebook

Received blessings from my entire family this morning. The journey to change the country will start again tomorrow.



Bimalendra Nidhi on Twitter

I have voted for your rights as your own representative. This election will address the people's aspiration for peace and prosperity.



Gagan Thapa on Facebook

My political resolve is to hand over a better Nepal to our daughters. I dedicate my vote to them.



Prakash Lohani Sharing on Facebook

Prakash Lohani of RPP (Nationalist) chats interestedly with Chinese Ambassador to Nepal while she inspected the conduct of elections.



Kamal Thapa on Twitter

Took my grand-daughter with me to the polling station. Dedicating my vote to the bright future of her generation.



Hari Bansa Acharya on Facebook

There are rules about who wins and who loses. But this time, it should be the country rather than a party or its leader that is a winner. As Nepal elects a new Parliament and government under the new Constitution after a decade of transition, the road ahead must lead to stability, prosperity and development. No one will lose. Everyone will win: the party, the country, the people. I cast my vote. Did you?



NOMINATIONS

BEST NEW ARTIST

1. Bartika Eam Rai	-	Khai
2. Mental Radio	-	Nasodha
3. Pahlenlo Batti Muni	-	Bari Lai
4. Samik Sapkota	-	Sadhain Sadhain
5. Sound Wings	-	Yatra

BEST VOCAL COLLABORATION

1. Karna Das & Anju Panta	-	Timro Mero
2. Manila Sotang & Uday Sotang	-	Dui Dinko
3. Milan Amatya & Shiva Pariyar	-	Dekhyo Bhane Maya Moha
4. Nattu Feat. Trishala Gurung	-	Aankha Bhari
5. Rajesh Payal Rai & Indira Joshi	-	Kanchhale

BEST SONG ORIGINALLY RECORDED FOR A MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

1. Deepak Sharma	-	Dekha Na Champa Suna Na Champa
2. Kali Prasad Baskota	-	Nira
3. Kali Prasad Baskota	-	Thamel Bazaara
4. Rajan Raj Shivakoti	-	Purba Paschim Rail
5. Tara Prakash Limbu	-	Sare Sare

BEST FEMALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE

1. Anju Panta	-	Aankha Rasayera
2. Bartika Eam Rai	-	Khai
3. Mausami Gurung	-	Ali Ali
4. Shital Moktan	-	Ke Ma Swatantra Chhu
5. Trishna Gurung	-	Garyo K Timro Mayale

BEST POP / ROCK COMPOSITION

1. Bipul Chettri	-	Siriri
2. Deepak Bajracharya	-	Sani
3. Garima Gurung & Iman Bikram Shah	-	Nasodha
4. Kali Prasad Baskota	-	Saili
5. Satyakrit	-	Ganesha Gananayak

BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE

1. Bharat Sitaula	-	Halka Halka
2. Bipul Chettri	-	Siriri
3. Deepak Bajracharya	-	Sani
4. Hemant Rana	-	Saili
5. Shiva Pariyar	-	Allare

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A GROUP OR DUO WITH VOCAL

1. 1974 AD	-	Pathai Deu Na
2. Mental Radio	-	Nasodha
3. Nepathya	-	Ho Rama Rama
4. Pahlenlo Batti Muni	-	Bari Lai
5. Satyakrit	-	Ganesha Gananayak

FOLK RECORD OF THE YEAR

1. Anju Lama & Milan Lama	-	Himal
2. Birahi Karki	-	Aamako Tasbir Haataima
3. Bishnu Majhi & Binod Bajurali	-	Pardesh No. 7
4. Deepak Sharma	-	Hey Barai
5. Sargam Shah Joshi & Gokul Raut	-	Company Tolako

BEST ARRANGEMENT

1. Ashish Abiral	-	Timi Bina Ek Pal Pani
2. Bipul Chettri	-	Siriri
3. Deepak Bajracharya & Rhythmic Band	-	Sani
4. Rikesh Gurung	-	Saili
5. Maharaj Thapa	-	Sanglo Sanglo

BEST COMPOSITION

1. Ashish Abiral	-	Timi Bina Ek Pal Pani
2. Hari Lamsal	-	Aaja Pheri
3. Karna Das	-	Sanglo Sanglo
4. Karna Das	-	Timro Mero
5. Shiva Pariyar	-	Chhahare Khola

BEST ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE

1. 1974 AD	-	Pathai Deu Na
2. Axix	-	Chyangba
3. Mental Radio	-	Nasodha
4. Nepathya	-	Ho Rama Rama
5. Sound Wings	-	Yatra

BEST FEMALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE

1. Anju Pant	-	Timi Bina Ek Pal Pani
2. Banika Pradhan	-	Purnimako Raat
3. Jonisha Paudel	-	Dukheko Naya
4. Melina Rai	-	Aaja Pheri
5. Milan Amatya	-	Ke Samiheu Malai

BEST MALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE

1. Ajar Jangam	-	Aaja Pheri
2. Karna Das	-	Sanglo Sanglo
3. Rajesh Payal Rai	-	Kulchi Hida
4. Satya Raj Acharya	-	Kali
5. Shiva Pariyar	-	Chhahare Khola

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1. 1974 AD	-	Hazaar Sapana
2. Bartika Eam Rai	-	Bimbaakash
3. Mental Radio	-	Mental Radio
4. Rajesh Payal Rai	-	Darshan Namaste 3
5. Sanjeev Singh	-	Timi Ra Ma

SONG OF THE YEAR

1. Bartika Eam Rai	-	Khai
2. Birendra Pathak	-	Aaja Pheri
3. Ek Narayan Bhandari	-	Timi Bina Ek Pal Pani
4. Rajendra Thapa	-	Dukheko Naya
5. Shweta Mainali	-	Chhahare Khola

RECORD OF THE YEAR

1. Bipul Chettri	-	Siriri
2. Deepak Bajracharya	-	Sani
3. Hemant Rana	-	Saili
4. Mental Radio	-	Nasodha
5. Shiva Pariyar	-	Chhahare Khola

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EVENTS



15th KIMFF,

Pick your favourite movies from the list of more than 70 films, including 15 in the 'Nepal Panorama' category, at the 15th Kathmandu International Film Festival (KIMFF).
14-18 December, Kumari Hall, Kamanpokhari, (01) 4440635

Public speaking,

Speakers Shivam K. Agrawal and Ekisha Sharma will help you to enhance communication and presentation skills, personality development and speech with this weekend public speaking sessions. You also stand a chance to win cash prize RS10,000 and opportunity to host an international conference in Nepal.
9 December, Laxmi Complex, Hattisar, Kathmandu, 9844064094, info.shivamgoyal@gmail.com, Registration: Rs1,200, Apply Online: <https://goo.gl/forms/bL7qciEnFIdrlu72>

Yala Newami,

This exhibition by photographer Bjørn, featuring a series of images of the people of Kathmandu Valley, reflects the ancient and vibrant culture of the Newars.
19 November -19 December, 5:30-10pm, Yala Mandala, Kwalkhu Road, Patan, Entry: Free, (01) 5536690



Khabar Garaun 1145,

Come for the launch of the National Women Commission's Helpline Khabar Garaun 1145, a 24-hour, toll free number. To be followed by plenary sessions on various themes.
10 December, 9:30am, Baneshwor Banquet, New Baneshwor, (01) 4256701



Christmas market mela,

An opportunity to enjoy amazing French food and wine as you buy Christmas gifts for your family and friends.
9 December, 11am-6pm, Alliance Francaise de Katmandou, Pulchok, Lalitpur, (01) 5009221

Piano workshop,

Learn to play piano with Spanish maestro Daahoud Salim. The free course is followed by a four-month certified course.
8 December, 5-6pm, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, (01) 50135554, 9813556945



Ceramic art,

Opening of an exhibition of ceramic works 'Nari Satranj' by eminent Nepali artist Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha.
10 December, 5:30pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 9818996169

Human rights poetry,

A poetry recitation programme on the occasion of 69th International Human Rights Day organised by Amnesty International Nepal. Renowned and established Nepali poets, litterateurs including the younger generation will participate.
9 December, 1:00 -3:30pm, Basantapur Durbar Square, (01) 4365431

MUSIC



Monali Thakur

Monali Thakur is an Indian singer and actress. She is the recipient of a National Film Award and a Filmfare Award. Thakur won the National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer for the song "Moh Moh Ke Dhaage" from the film Dum Laga Ke Haisha (2015) and the Filmfare Award for Best Female Playback Singer for the song "Sawaar Loon" from the film Lootera (2013). She is presently an "expert" on Colors TV's Rising Star.

Kathmandu Chorale,

Participate in the 35th anniversary holiday concert organised by The Kathmandu Chorale. Free entry, snacks and drinks.
9 December, 3:30-6pm, KISC School, Dhobighat.

Tattwa live,

Make your weekend memorable at Shambala Garden with a taste of barbeque and live performances by Tattwa Band, just Rs2,000 per person (net).
Every Friday, Shambala Garden, Hotel Shangri-La, (01) 4412999



Saturday night live,

Keep yourself warm with a glass of good wine and soothing beats of your very own Diwas Gurung.
9 December, 8pm, Base Camp: Outdoor Lifestyle, Jhamsikhel

OUR PICK



Opens in Kathmandu on 8 December

Based on Agatha Christie's 1934 detective novel of the same name, this mystery crime drama follows a murder abroad a train world famous detective Hercule Poirot is travelling on, with other 13 high-profile passengers. Poirot is recruited to solve the case where everyone's a suspect. The fourth adaptation of the celebrated novel features a stellar cast of Kenneth Branagh, Penelope Cruz, William Dafoe, Judi Dench, Johnny Depp, Michelle Pfeiffer and Daisy Ridley.

DINING

Phat Kath,

Offering French-ish food, a takeaway crêperie, low tables and hookahs for hippies, tables and chairs for normal people, and a formidable hip hop soundtrack for everyone.
Thamel, 9816696571

Embers,

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



Gyakok at Ghangri,

Heat up with Ghangri special Gyakok at a special package of Rs 995 (exclusive of taxes). Complimentary drink included. Valid till 31 December.
Boudha, Ghangri Botique Hotel, (01)4482888

Fuji Bakery,

Tucked in Chakupat, this bakery offers homemade goodies like apple pie, pain du chocolat, and banana cake.
Chakupat, Lalitpur

Vootoo,

The new home of Newari cuisine also has a safe continental menu for those who are not yet ready to experiment with new dishes.
Lajimpat, (01)4005222

Gokarna Resort,

Choose from a wide variety of Lebanese shawarma, Hyderabad biyani, Tibetan momos and many more.
Every Saturday, Gokarna Forest Resort, Ranikunj, 12 to 3 pm, For more details: (01) 4451212



1905,

Heritage boutique suites with garden dining, 1905 Suites and Restaurants is now open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Bookings open for four boutique suites with promotional rates and offers open till June.
Nagpokhari, Naxal, For more information: 9860374450

GETAWAY



Famous Farm,

Wake up to the sounds of chirping birds and a fresh morning breeze wafting in through the aankhijhyal.
Nuwakot, (01)4700426, info@rural-heritage.com

Hotel Barahi,

Enjoy a great view of the lake, cultural shows, a big swimming pool to beat the heat this summer and scrumptious pastries from the German Bakery in the hotel premises.
Lakeside, Pokhara, (061) 460617/463526



Shivapuri Heights Cottage,

Treat yourself to a 90 minutes ayurvedic massage at Neema's Spa, followed by a healthy lunch at the Cottage. Advance booking essential. Transport available on request at extra cost.
Shivapuri Hills, Bhudanilkantha, 9841371927

Pataleban Vineyard Resort,

Japanese-influenced eco-resort with great views, jungle walks and picnics.
Chisapani, Kathmandu, 9841679364



Park Village Resort,

Yoga, detox and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu. Himalayan Peace and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, (01)4370286, peace@wellness.com.np

Tiger Mountain Lodge,

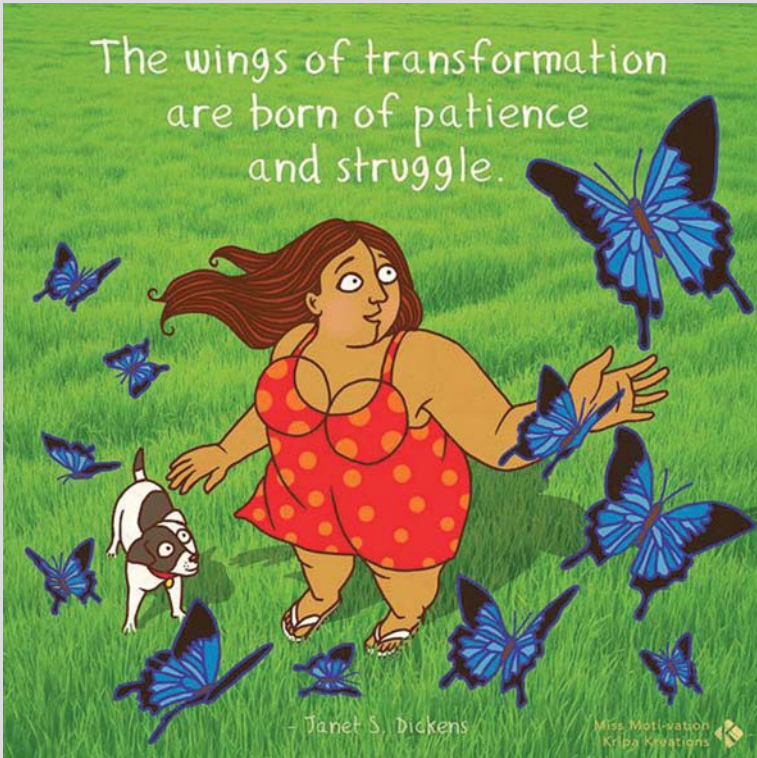
Situated 300m above Pokhara valley, this resort offers spectacular views of Machhapuchhre, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu.
www.tigermountainpokhara.com, (01)4426427, 9849194874

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

MISS MOTI-VATION

KRIPA JOSHI



AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 1-7 December

301 – 500 Hazardous						
201 – 300 Very Unhealthy						
151 – 200 Unhealthy						
101 – 150 Unhealthy for sensitive groups						
50 – 100 Moderate						
0 – 50 Good						
FRIDAY Dec 1						
SATURDAY Dec 2						
SUNDAY Dec 3						
MONDAY Dec 4						
TUESDAY Dec 5						
WEDNESDAY Dec 6						
THURSDAY Dec 7						

Although the daily average for air pollution throughout the week was in the “Unhealthy” red band, a 20% drop was registered on 7 December at 7AM due to a ban on vehicular traffic on Election Day. This shows the contribution of car exhaust on the Air Quality Index of Kathmandu Valley. The weekly average also dropped slightly because of the early morning drizzle on Tuesday. This weekly roundup of air quality is based on measurements of the US Embassy's monitoring station at Phora Durbar.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Nepal hosts Asia for Animals

Hundreds of experts from the world's leading animal welfare organisations concluded the four-day Asia for Animals Conference in Kathmandu on Tuesday. Held for the first time in Nepal, it drew participants from over 45 countries.

Hosted by the Jane Goodall Institute Nepal, renowned animal scholars and advocates such as Grace Ge Grabriel, Andrew Rowan, Suzanne Rogers and Chu Tseng-Hung spoke about saving endangered wildlife, preventing cruelty to animals and ways to manage urban fauna.

Nepal's own pioneering conservationist and founder of the Chitwan National Park, Hemanta Mishra, opened the conference with a retrospective look at how Nepal's nature conservation program survived a decade of civil strife.

"Despite political differences, and there really are too many political parties out there today, local communities wholly supported wildlife and displayed courage and competency in crisis," Mishra said. "It is encouraging to see that tiger poaching has gone down in recent years, while rhino numbers are increasing by the hundreds."

Heartbreaking footage of dogs, cats, and donkeys being mistreated were shown during the sessions, alongside success stories and case studies of community involvement around the world to improve animal welfare.



HUMANS FOR ANIMALS: Sangita Sapkota of the Jane Goodall Institute (*left*). Andrew Rowan of the Humane Society, Alex Mayers from Donkey Sanctuary and Taiwanese activist Chu Tseng-Hung at a panel (*left to right, above*). Conservationist Hemanta Mishra (*right*) speaks at the plenary of the Asia for Animals conference in Kathmandu on Monday.



The theme for this year's conference was 'Changing Human Behaviour', and indeed that was seen as the key to caring for animals in a meaningful way. Experts emphasised educating local communities across Asia on scientific and humane methods to interact with animals.

Indian environmentalist and historian Nanditha Krishna said: "You cannot succeed by just issuing laws. The only way we can change human behaviour is by going to village by village and talking."

Pramada Shah of Animal Nepal highlighted how Lalitpur and Kathmandu municipalities have slowly changed their attitude

towards 'stray' dogs and instead of poisoning them are now supporting campaigns to splay and treat street canines.

Indeed, Kathmandu has made dramatic strides in reducing the population of its street dogs and also their mistreatment. Volunteer groups have established 'mobile vet' hotlines and involved local communities to monitor canine welfare. As a result fewer injured animals are coming in from road accidents and infections.

"What we want is a cruelty free society. It's innate in our culture," said Shah. "I'm positive, in this day and age that Nepalis are a progressive people."

Nepal's animal rights movement scored a major victory just days before the conference with a Supreme Court ban on culling street dogs, as well as the use of poison to control dog populations.

Efforts to stop illegal wildlife trafficking were also discussed at the conference, with Bala Ram Thapa from the Government of Nepal citing the arrest in October of six persons smuggling chimpanzees and exotic birds through Tribhuvan International Airport.

"Make no mistake," Thapa said of the incident, "the criminals will be in jail for 20 years."

Andrew Rowan, executive director of the Humane Society

of the United States, said that although animal welfare in Nepal has improved there is still much more work to be done. He says that animal groups in Nepal should be working more closely together, and under the backing of standardised government law.

"There are many drafts of laws being made today, but the next step is to pass them," said Rowan.

The conference ended with a field trip on Wednesday to Chitwan National Park, Nepal's conservation success story which has rescued the Royal Bengal Tiger and the Asiatic One-horned Rhinoceros from the brink of extinction. 🇳🇵

Ryan Chang

Johan Reinhard gets Hillary Medal

This year's Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal has gone to Johan Reinhard, an Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society, and world-acclaimed explorer and anthropologist who has done important work on the Incas in Peru as well as in the sacred 'beyul' valleys of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal.

The medal will be conferred to Reinhard on 11 December in Pokhara Mountain Museum to coincide with International Day of Mountains. He is also returning to Nepal to continue his earlier research into hunter-gatherer groups.

In 2003 the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal was initiated by unanimous resolution of the Namche Conference: Parks, People and Mountain



Tourism. The Hillary Medal both recognises Sir Edmund's life-long commitment to the welfare of mountain people and their environment and also encourages the continuing emulation of his example. It is awarded 'for remarkable service in the conservation of culture and nature in mountainous regions'.

Reinhard is a Senior Fellow at The Mountain Institute. He is also the discoverer in 1995 of the Incan Ice Maiden, a frozen mummy on Peru's Mt Ampato. In the 1980s he directed the first underwater archaeological project in Lake Titicaca. His expeditions in the Andes have led to the discovery of over a dozen Incan human sacrifices on five mountains, including three on Argentina's Mount Llullaillaco, the world's highest archaeological site at 6,000m in 1999.

His investigations have led him to present theories to explain the mystery of the Nazca Lines, the giant desert drawings, pre-Hispanic ceremonial sites built on Andean mountain summits, and the ancient ceremonial centers of Machu Picchu, Chavin, and Tiahuanaco.

He has more than 70 publications, including six books, and his research has been featured in a number of television documentaries. His work has been distinguished with several awards, including the Rolex Award for Enterprise, the Puma de Oro (Bolivia's highest award in the field of archaeology), and the Explorers Medal of the Explorers Club, while Outside magazine selected him as one of the 25 most extraordinary explorers and the Ford Motor Company chose him as one of 12 "Heroes for the Planet." 🇺🇸



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Finally, something not about elections

We expect most royal leaders and loyal readers of this paper to be suffering from EFS (Election Fatigue Syndrome) which is why the Ass will not mention anything to do with erections for the duration of this week's column. Maybe next week, but can't promise.

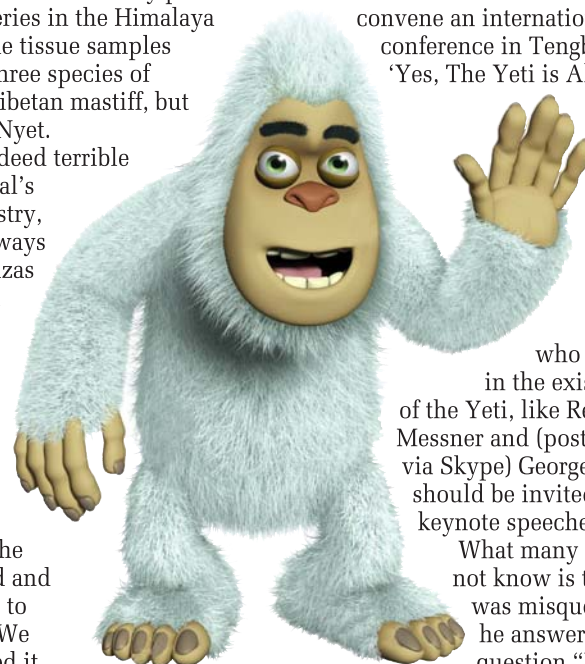
As you all know by now, this was a week that we learnt of the devastating news that evolutionary biologists at the State University of New York at Buffalo declared that the Yeti does not exist. After detailed DNA analysis of the genome sequence of the femur, underarm hair and toe-nails from Yeti body parts from monasteries in the Himalaya they found the tissue samples belonged to three species of bears and a Tibetan mastiff, but not the Yeti. Nyet.

This is indeed terrible news for Nepal's tourism industry, which has always reaped bonanzas from the aura surrounding the existence of the beast. It was the Yeti legend that preserved Nepal's mystique in the outside world and lured tourists to our country. We even honoured it by naming an airline, a development bank, a casino, a luxury hotel, and a vacuum insulated tumbler after the Abominable Snowperson.

To add insult to injury, the announcement about the non-existence of the Yeti was made while an international conference was taking place in Kathmandu this week of Asia for Animals at (where else?) the Yak & Yeti Hotel.

It is clear the international community is not going to lift a finger to help Nepal to restore the Yeti's existentialism, in fact countries with their own hypothetical animals like the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot or Sasquatch may have a vested interest in declaring there are no Yetis in Nepal so that their own tourism sectors will reap the benefit.

Nepal cannot take this international conspiracy lying down. We should be standing upright on our hind legs. It is incumbent upon higher up authoritarians in GONE to take this matter up forthwith with the urgency it deserves. We should immediately call a national strike and shut down the country. We should advise all our embassies abroad to get our Ambassadors and Plenipotentiaries to don Yeti outfits and host press conferences. We should fire off a few ICMs in the general direction of Guam. We should declare 2018 as the International Year of the Yeti and convene an international conference in Tengboche titled 'Yes, The Yeti is Alive and Kicking'.



Celebrities who believe in the existence of the Yeti, like Reinhold Messner and (posthumously via Skype) George Mallory, should be invited to give keynote speeches.

What many people do not know is that Mallory was misquoted when he answered the question "Why do you want to climb Mt Everest?". In actual fact, the question was "Why do you keep looking for the Yeti?" To which his answer was the now famous line: "Because it is there."

Nepal should allow international scientific expeditions to look for the Yeti, and even subsidise them with tax payer's money. These expeditions should sign MoUs putting them under contractual obligation to find just enough evidence that the yeti exists, without actually finding a specimen of the said animal. We want to keep looking for the Yeti, but we don't ever want to find him and/or her.



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