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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

UNITED WE STAND

The unification of the Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninists and the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist-Centre to form the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) took a roller-coaster eight months, but finally happened last week. The announcement has been accompanied by metaphors and hyperbole — as if we were witnessing the merger acquisition of two multinational banks, not two parties that believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Some commentators have called the new entity the most powerful Communist Party in the world, without specifying the scale of measurement. They talk about it as if the NCP is as monolithic as the Communist Party of China. The co-chairs of the merged party, K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, have compared each other to ‘captain and co-pilot’ of a jet, or as atoms of ‘hydrogen’ and ‘oxygen’. We are left guessing who is flying the plane, and who is the first officer. Or which one is the explosive hydrogen gas, and who the oxygen in this new water molecule.

Nepal may now well be politically stable, but accountability is a mirage and prosperity seems to pertain only to rent-seekers in office. Ahead of the budget, the government’s presentation to Parliament of its policies and programs is mostly old wine in an old bottle: we are told Nepalis will soon be twice as rich as the country graduates to middle-income status by 2030, generates 15,000MW of power within a decade, doubles harvests in five years and ends overseas migration.

It is all right to dream, but targets have to be realistic. Reaching all the goals listed in President Bhandari’s speech to Parliament on Monday are predicated on transparency, better governance and delivery. These need a structural overhaul of the state system, and no one seems to be talking about that.

The unified party may have shared a Communist past, but in thought, principles and behaviour they could not have been further apart. What may make the merger work is that the NCP now has one common ideology: crony capitalism.

Much as we would like to give the benefit of doubt to the neo-Communists, and wish the merger well for the sake of long-suffering Nepalis, there is reason to be skeptical. The government and the party that now leads it is off to a rather slow start.

All we have heard so far are promises and more promises: making Nepal “like heaven” in ten years, bullet trains whizzing through

tunnels to Kathmandu from south and north, international airports galore.

Meanwhile, the Ring Road in Balkhu is a muddy quagmire where the only Great Leap Forward is what pedestrians have to take to avoid large puddles. After much hullabaloo over cracking down on bus syndicates, an Oli-loyalist minister has sacked the Director General from the Department of Transportation who was trying to get bus route permits out of the clutches of the mafia.

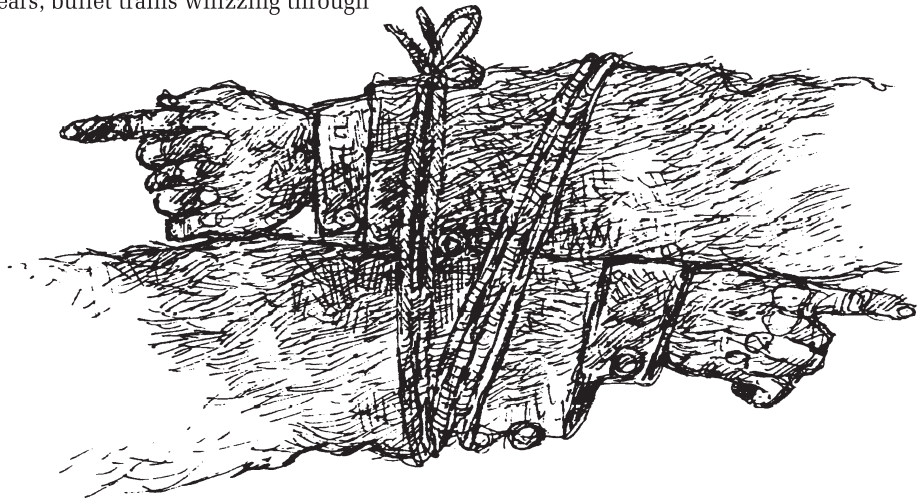
One year after elected mayors and village chiefs took over, and nearly six months after the provinces got their own elected leaders, the devolution process is going nowhere very fast. Kathmandu municipality seems to be comatose, Lalitpur’s mayor is everywhere but nowhere, and in many rural municipalities elected contractors are awarding lucrative infrastructure projects to themselves, and plundering natural resources.

The UML and the CPN-MC came together out of necessity. The UML was tired of being a junior partner in unstable coalitions because of its fragmented vote bank. The Maoists had disintegrated into little pieces, and Chairman Dahal needed to secure his own political future. He also wanted to wash his hands of the blood he helped spill during the war by leaving no trace of his Maoist party.

The loser in this game will be the survivors and families of victims of war crimes and human rights violations as we report in this issue (*page 1,11*). Reports that Bal Krishna Dhungel, accused in a war-era murder in Okhaldhunga, is getting a presidential pardon on Republic Day next week presages even more serious attempts to evade truth, justice and reparations. The groundwork has already been laid by weakening the mandates of the Commission on Enforced Disappearances and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The unified party, as well as the opposition NC and the security forces, are united in this attempt to let bygones be bygones. The people’s apathy and their lack of confidence that politicians and warriors will ever face up to their crimes, helps the perpetrators. Meanwhile, the families of more than 1,400 disappeared Nepalis still do not have closure. Relatives of the dead and wounded are still struggling.

The ghosts of the dead will continue to haunt the NCP as long as it does not confront its violent past, and make amends.



10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The 23-30 May 2008 issue of *Nepali Times* (#401) ten years ago this week carried an Editorial titled ‘Procrasti Nation’ about the hope for a peace dividend following the Maoist victory in elections. As the guerrilla commanders were sworn in as ministers, the Editorial echoed a similar sentiment to this week’s cautious optimism about the merger of the Maoists with the UML to form the NCP:

‘Depending on whether you see the glass as half full or half empty, we are waiting for Nepal to enter a brave new era of democracy and progress, while others are convinced that we are headed towards a totalitarian abyss.

The argument is well made that the Maoists won the elections, and they should be allowed to lead a government. The NC and UML should get over their self-obsessed misery and deep suspicion of each other, and look at the nation’s future instead of their partisan ambitions. And in a vestige of the Old Nepal they take to the streets and declare a shutdown, punishing the people to get back at the Maoists. So set are they in their ways, that to change seems to be asking too much.’



ONLINE PACKAGES



HEALTH WARNING

Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest threats to humans in modern times. It already kills 700,000 people every year and will account for 10 million deaths per year by 2050 if no action is taken. Watch this video to see how the unregulated use of antibiotics in Nepal’s poultry industry is spreading anti-microbial resistance in the population, and making patients unresponsive to treatment of infections. *Story page 8-9.*



RAMADAN IN EXILE

Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing their native Myanmar after every military crackdown. Since 2012, hundreds have found their way to Nepal where they are safe from religious persecution. But this festive month makes them long for home. Watch this video to see how the small Rohingya community in a camp in Kapan is celebrating Ramadan. *Story page 14-15.*

NATIONAL INTEREST

I have not been impressed by this author’s articles, as his scanty insight is often obscured by blatant business shrewdness and overbearing Western superiority, and his latest column is no exception (‘Shooting ourselves in the foot’, Ted Atkins, #909). If Western countries make it very difficult and expensive for poor people to obtain a visa, it is because they are protecting their national resources -- job opportunity and social welfare. In the same sense, Nepal charges high permit fee for mountain climbing to protect and benefit from one of its most valuable resources.

Justin Zhao

BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION

Not just plastic bags, how about wrappers like Wai-Wai packets? (‘Industrial scale litter’, Mukesh Pokhrel, #910) Some loan/grants should be given to businesses to make bio-degradable plastic bags and packages. Let’s not fight each other, but work together to solve this problem.

Abs Pan

■ Many tourists talk about the trash problem in Nepal (‘Plastic Money’, Samuel Johns, #910). They don’t realise it is they themselves who are doing the most damage.

Frugal Travels

CONSPIRACY

One body two heads, two heads one conspiracy (‘one body, two heads’, Om Astha Rai, #910).

Alex Ferguson

FOREIGN AID

40 years of foreign aid and still asking for more..Poor schools, poor roads, disastrous health care, aeronautical industry at a safety and service low, pollution at all time high, corruption, apathy and inefficiency a middle/high class/cast trait - and a new multi billion political district system that ‘someone’ has to finance. Thank and bless the 3 million Nepali slaves working in the Gulf countries to keep the country running. For how long?

David Durkan

WHAT'S TRENDING



The life and times of Arniko

by Sewa Bhattarai
Arniko’s legacy is well documented in China, but little is known about this enigmatic artist who travelled from Nepal to Tibet, then went on to work at the court of Kublai Khan and shape China’s art and architecture. Go online for this most popular story of the week, and retrace the history of Arniko.

- Most reached and shared on Facebook
- Most commented
- Most visited online page



Plastic money

By Samuel Johns
Visit nepalitimes.com to read this widely shared story about how Langtang Valley is recovering not just from the earthquake, but also from its plastic crisis. Watch a video tracking the production and use of plastic bags in Kathmandu, and why past bag bans have failed. See how locals in Langtang collect discarded plastic bottles and recycle them in a plant in Pokhara.

Most popular on Twitter

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
The government will be happy to get rid of perceived negative influencers that come with foreign funds, but will it end up throwing out the baby with the bath water? Olav Myrhol analyses the draft of Integrity Policy.

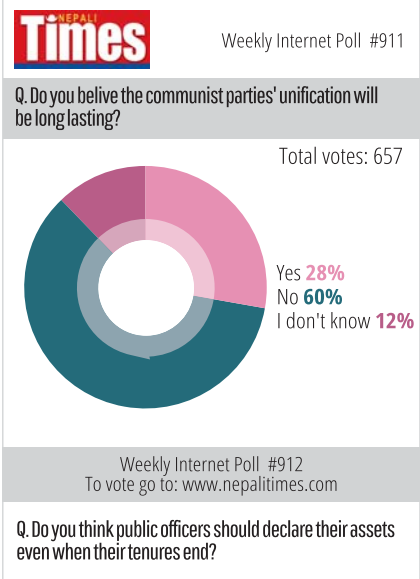
Mohna Ansari @MohnaAnsari
Integrity policy must guaranty freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly & insure democracy & the rule of law. Don’t forget core value of Human Rights.

Nepali Times @nepalitimes
Living alone in jungle, patrolling with the Army, being close to wild animals, climbing trees and doing physically challenging work. The women conservationists who not only perform these duties, but also battle discrimination. @mukeshjee @Himal_Khabar

bharat koirala @lampuchhre
How wonderful! I have seen some that community forests being maintained by women are the best!

Kunda Dixit @kundadixit
How discarded water bottles in Langtang are recycled by @PSD_Nepal and Himalayan Life Plastic in Pokhara. Samuel Johns reports in @nepalitimes: <https://www.nepalitimes.com/here-now/plastic-money/> ... #upcycling #recycling #nepal #BeatPlasticPollution @UNEnvironment

Madhav Bahadur Karki @KarkiMadhav
Excellent practice, hope this does not end up as a project initiated by an outsider that evaporates once the Project completes: we need scaling up and scaling up of good practices.



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Six decades of cooperation

Nepal and Germany have to build the future on the foundation of a well understood past

Roland Schäfer

Sixty years ago Nepal established diplomatic relations with Germany when both countries were emerging from dark and difficult times, and both were trying to establish a new identity. They wanted to open up to the world and define a new place for themselves within it.

Look at Nepal today: it has overcome decades of profiteering by a rent seeking elite, it has overcome a decade of civil strife, it has given itself a new, democratic, republican and federal constitution, and the Nepali people have validated all this by voting massively last year, installing the most powerful government in Nepal's modern history.

This government, carried by a united party, knows it has to fulfill the promises which got it elected. It has the power and the wisdom to reconcile the country with its past and help it look boldly to the future. Building the future on the foundation of a well understood past shared by all will be a process.

It cannot be achieved by the stroke of a pen or the handing out of some money from state coffers. But if this process gets to a credible start now, in the coming two to five years it will be empowering Nepali women and men like never before in history.

From many conversations in the last nine months here, I am confident to say: It seems to feel good to be a Nepali today. And I can tell you myself: it feels good to be a German today.

We have been holding joint consultations on the next two years cycle of development cooperation between Germany and Nepal. Germany will continue to engage in the health and energy sectors, and will continue to work on enabling Nepali small and medium sized enterprises for a competitive world market.

Our cooperation builds on decades of



common work. Bhaktapur may have the longest story to tell about successes in our cooperation, about trust built, even after initial failures were overcome. This learning process never ends. I am happy to further engage with this proud, able city and its citizens on a cooperation that makes best use of what Bhaktapur can give to the nation and of what a modern Germany can contribute to this long standing partnership.

Not all is government to government cooperation. We want to make Nepal a place for German and European industry to invest in. Employment will be created durably and reliably in this competitive world through private sector engagement. I thank Nepal for extending support to Germany in the upcoming election to non-permanent membership of the United Nations. We count on the support, so that we can work for multilateral peace-making, something to which Nepal's army is contributing so much.

And look at Germany today. The country is reunited, its 80 million people are part of a European Union of 500 million citizens who freely trade, travel, work and transfer assets among themselves. The European Union ensures the rule of law for all and organizes the outside protection of the Union territory.

Germany has established its own particular brand of foreign and security policy – not so much by talking, but by how we behaved. We have taken on responsibility such as intervening militarily against dictatorship and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, offering the parties to the conflict the option to become members of the European Union. But we refused to participate in the invasion of Iraq at the beginning of the century. The most important point for us today: the European Union as a whole is establishing its own Foreign and Security policy of which Germany is fully a part. 🇩🇪

Excerpt of a speech by Roland Schäfer, Ambassador of Germany to Nepal, on 20 May to mark the 60th anniversary of Nepal-Germany diplomatic relations.



SIKUMARA

Arniko lunch for executives

Arniko Room at Hotel Annapurna is not a new restaurant and honors the famous Kathmandu artist who took Nepali architecture to China and beyond. Now, the inspiration is travelling in the opposite direction: from China to Nepal in the form of exclusive cuisine.

Since Chinese cuisine of dubious authenticity is available in even the simplest eatery in Kathmandu, many high-end restaurants have been setting themselves apart with 'authentic' Chinese taste.

Arniko has stuck to its time-tested recipes in its new 'Executive Lunch' menu, and from the queue outside one recent afternoon, the idea seems to work well.

The special lunch menu is targeted at executives and bankers, and for this the restaurant location is just right: on Darbar Marg. Light and simple, the menu has three options each with three courses, including varieties of soup, fried rice, noodles, chicken and fish items, tons of greens and desserts.

Sous Chef Santosh Subedi says of the menu: "We wanted to tap Kathmandu's exotic food craze and the willingness to spend a good amount for lunch, without compromising on health."

Chef Subedi joined Arniko Room nearly three years ago after a longish culinary stint in Dubai. He calls himself 'The Nepali Dumpling Master' (sounds grander than 'Momo Man'), pioneering new additions to the menu like Mantou Bun (a Chinese steamed bun).

On Chinese New Year, Arniko Room laid out a spread that included a Shitake Chicken soup, an authentic Chinese dish that became the talk of the town. In contrast, not many enjoyed the Chinese style handmade noodles the kitchen introduced for its Chinese noodle festival. The Chef took this as a cue to stick to what customers really like, rather than on 'Indo-Chinese' items.

In fact, many of the restaurant's customers love its Chinese cuisine so much that they have 'regular' orders. One recent afternoon, a group of Chinese and Nepali customers sat down at a table for four and ordered: "The regular: Schezwan fried rice or noodles, Hong Kong or Kung Pao chicken, and ginger prawn."

Chef Subedi says the restaurant's secret is that it doesn't have any secrets: "We do not use MSG or any other seasonings, the taste comes from the balance of the flavours of salt, pepper, sauces and fresh ingredients."

Even though the number of Chinese tourists in Kathmandu is rising, the restaurant mostly sees Nepali and multi-cultural customers enticed to come again and again by the new Executive Lunch menu. 🇩🇪

Sikuma Rai

Executive Lunch at Arniko Room
Sunday- Friday, 12-3pm, Rs1,500++
Hotel Annapurna, Darbar Marg, (01) 4221711

prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS

Premium and Strong

United Breweries, in association with Yeti Brewery, has launched the flagship Indian beer brands Kingfisher Premium and Kingfisher Strong in all retail outlets in Nepal. The 650ml bottles of the beers are priced at Rs275 and Rs235, while 500ml cans are worth Rs210 and Rs180.



by Boeing 787 Dreamliners. The flights from Doha depart at 2:10am and 8:30am, and at 3:25pm and 9am from London Gatwick connecting to flights to and from Kathmandu.

Sporty wheels

Turkish Airlines ENGAGE Empowering League 2018, the seven day long wheelchair basketball competition in Nepal, will be held from 2-30 June at



Central Covered Hall, Dasarath Rangasala, Tripureshwor. Five female teams and nine male teams will be participating from in and outside the Valley.

Second gateway

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To celebrate the season of football, Smart Appliances, a sister concern of KL Dugar Group, announced 'Skyworth World Cup

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5 star for Hyatt

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu has been nominated as 'Nepal's Leading Hotel 2018' by World Travel Awards for the 12th consecutive

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year. The hotel recently welcomed a new General Manager to Nepal, Rajesh Ramdas.

prabhu BANK

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Past Everest anniversaries

As the 65th year of the first ascent approaches, the mystery of a specially blended Chivas Regal is solved

“I know he’s an imposter.” The short wiry man with weasel eyes hissed loudly in the row behind me, his voice husky with vehemence. “That can’t possibly be the real Duke of Argyll.”

I smiled as the wail of bagpipes reverberated off the walls and the Duke sashayed his way down the



SO FAR SO GOOD
Lisa Choegyal

length of the Hyatt ballroom in full highland dress – tight green jacket, bone buttons, clan tartan kilt and silver-mounted fur sporran swaying jauntily in time to the beat. Escorted by uniformed pipers, he bore aloft the elaborate gold-embossed bottle containing the rare 50-year-old Chivas Regal that was specially blended in a limited edition to celebrate the occasion, distilled the same year as the historic first ascent of Mount Everest in 1953.

During the golden jubilee rehearsal, his whisky colleague Peter Prentice had told me with glee: “Torquhil Argyll is wearing only his second best gear this evening -- his main outfit is listed as a national treasure and cannot leave Inveraray Castle in Scotland.”

Responding to the rousing music and drama of the moment, the audience rose to their feet in spontaneous applause as the bottle, along with a large cheque for the Himalayan Trust, was presented to Sir Edmund Hillary (*above, with the bottle*) waiting on stage flanked by Tenzing Norgay’s relatives and members of the Sherpa community.

The festivities continued with Sherpa singing and dancing, feet sliding and stomping in celebration of the 50th anniversary in 2003. The men wore identical pale felt hats with their dark chubas, the women glowing in bright striped aprons, multi-coloured ribbons and intricate gold headdresses.



June Hillary, resplendent in red velvet, leaned over to whisper with concern: “Seems like an awful lot of people here.” The huge room was filled with mountaineers, ambassadors, filmmakers, media, family and friends. So many had turned up that the Hyatt had to raid their freezers to ensure enough dinner for everyone.

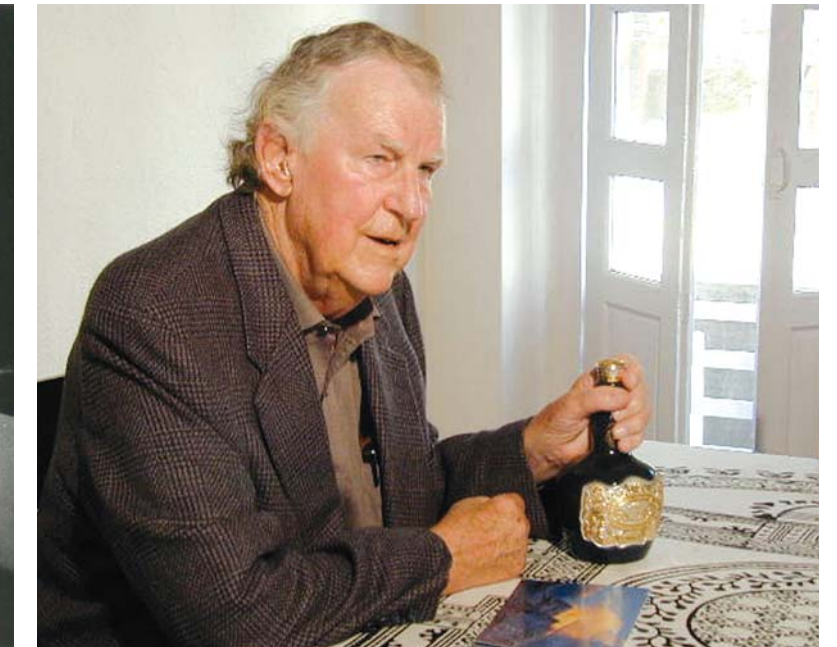
Heaps of cream silk *khadas* adorned the dignitaries, and guests wore distinctive turquoise sashes emblazoned with ‘Triumph on Everest’ and the date 29 May 2003, exactly 50 years after the highest mountain in the world had been scaled. Mine is still draped over a picture in my office, slightly faded but vivid with memories of that distant day that I had helped organise.

Ed arrived at the Hyatt in a helicopter showering flower petals from a felicitation event with the Prime Minister, and the morning had been spent in the British Embassy garden – broadcast in real time by Television New Zealand with Nepal TV technicians. Presenting the show was New Zealand’s star host Mark Sainsbury,

always genial with a quick wit lurking behind his luxuriant trademark moustache.

Amidst the rose beds and yellow Ambassadorial residence, with a decorated elephant for added glamour, a dazzling array of Everesters rotated in front of Mark’s live microphone – multi-summitting Sherpas, veterans from the 1953 expedition, legends such as Messner, Habeler and Breashears. And of course Sir Ed, elderly and warm in the humid May sunshine. The Ambassador’s stylish French wife had set aside their study as a sanctuary for Ed and June, and I asked if they needed a shower to cool off. “Not necessary, Lisa. We’re not fussy like that!” June retorted.

It was of course a British expedition in 1953, even though the first to summit were a Kiwi and Tenzing Norgay from Darjeeling. The Brits have been gracious in hosting the Everest-Sagarmatha-Chomolungma anniversaries ever since. Elizabeth Hawley and Chris Bonington took me to the 1993 40th celebration in the Ambassador’s drawing room where I met the original expedition’s fearsome



leader Lord John Hunt, mellowed into a charming old man. In 2013 the 60th took place in the Defence Attache’s house as the Residence was undergoing timely earthquake strengthening.

The then-Chief Secretary (now Nepal Ambassador to China) and Everest leader Leela Mani Paudyal did the honours, with Reinhold Messner and New Zealand’s Lydia Bradey jointly cutting an anniversary cake, their speeches lost to a faulty microphone. And next week the 65th will again be marked by Nepal, Britain and New Zealand. It was three years after the Kathmandu golden jubilee that Torquhil and Peter asked me to arrange another Chivas ceremony, this time close to the Hillary home in a classy Auckland restaurant full of showy begonias and New Zealand wine masters, hosted by their Paris-based boss.

The plan was to present Sir Ed with another large cheque for the Himalayan Trust and in return to retrieve the most expensive bottle of whisky of all time for the Chivas Brothers Archive in Speyside, Scotland’s oldest distillery, where it

YO HO HO: Lord Hunt, Lisa Choegyal, Sir Chris Bonington and Elizabeth Hawley at 40th anniversary of the Everest ascent in 1993 in Kathmandu.

Sir Edmund Hillary with the historic bottle of 50-year-old Chivas Regal in the 50th anniversary in Kathmandu in May 2003.

now resides.

There was some confusion and red faces when it came to finding the precious bottle – for safekeeping it had been carried back from Nepal to UK, but a search of Torquhil’s rambling Scottish castle drew a blank. To widespread relief it was eventually tracked down in the bottom left-hand drawer of the brand manager’s desk in the London office.

That balmy summer evening in New Zealand, Sir Ed had as usual prepared notes for his speech. On the back of an old envelope in spidery handwriting, he muddled up whom he was thanking for what bottle and for which cheque. I gently put him right, but I do regret not having kept that envelope. 🇳🇵

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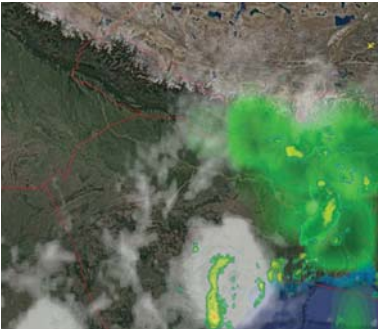


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There will be a slight let-up from the pre-monsoon showers on Friday before light rain resumes on Sunday afternoon. Saturday should be partly cloudy, hot and humid with the maximum temperature hitting 29, making it sticky all day. The Indian Met office has forecast the southwest monsoon arriving at the Kerala coast on schedule in end-May. This means that unless something waylays the rain wind as it progresses across India and Bangladesh, it should enter Nepal air space by mid-June. Stay tuned.

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Bhutanese in America find it easier to settle down among their own kind

Rajesh Koirala

After two decades of living in bamboo sheds in camps in eastern Nepal, refugees from Bhutan resettled in the United States have found that adjustment to life in a new country is easier if they can live and work among their own people.

After being evicted from Bhutan in the early 1990s, being stateless in refugee camps in Jhapa and Morang for so long, more than 100,000 Bhutanese have been resettled in seven countries around the world, with the United States taking most of them.

After adjusting to culture shock, and overcoming the language barrier, most of them here have found jobs in large American companies so that they can live, commute and

work together.

Narayan Gautam is among 200 Bhutanese who work at the large clothing chain Nordstrom in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Gautam and other Bhutanese who worked for Apple, DB Schenker, and Aerotech have all switched en masse to Nordstrom, which has policy to make it easier for immigrants to fit in.

Unlike Nepalis in the US who tend to work individually, the Bhutanese prefer to go where there are other compatriots. Pancha Bahadur Gurung, for instance works in a coat factory called Southwick in Haverhill, Massachusetts, which employs 25 other Bhutanese. “Four years ago there were 60 Bhutanese here, but they moved elsewhere to be together,” he explains.

Thousands of Bhutanese work at Fedex distribution hubs in Texas, in dairy farms



in Rochester, New York, and in chocolate factories in Vermont.

In Ohio state, where many Bhutanese refugees from Nepal have settled, the former refugees have flocked to the same company for employment. For example, Nepali is almost the lingua franca at Amazon depots in Ohio where more than 1,500 Bhutanese work as dispatchers and managers.

Dal Bahadur Basnet and five family members all work there, and he says proudly: “We now have a reputation for being among

IN A UNITED STATE: Bhutanese working at sportswear factory Under Armour in Maryland take a break recently (*above*).

Prem Basnet is among thousands of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese working at Amazon in Ohio (*left*).

the top nationalities who perform well.”

Nepali-speaking Bhutanese can be found from beginner level to medium to managerial positions in two Amazon processing centres in Ohio, too. Dhanpati Acharya is a programmer at Amazon, and says: “People like to work at Amazon because of good pay, ease of finding and leaving jobs, flexible timing, and other facilities.”

Nepali-speaking Bhutanese have now fanned out across North America, working in stores like SK Foods, bag manufacturer Thirty One, medical equipment distributor Cardinal Health, Axiom Plastics, KDC Cosmetics, Zulily readymade clothes, and poultry farms in Kentucky.

Bhim Koirala lives in Louisville Kentucky and says his friends have adjusted well for work at Amazon, Yanfeng motor parts, General Electric and Ford Motors.

Jobs are opening up for migrants and refugees from Syria, Sudan, Chad and Bhutan because so many employers here have found that white Americans are failing drug tests because of opioid addiction. Like migrants from Vietnam and Laos in an earlier era, the Bhutanese have found a niche working together in large companies where they can be among their own kind. 🇳🇵

Rajesh Koirala is the editor of Aksharika, a Nepali-language newsletter in the United States.

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Sonia Awale

The next time you dig into a plate of chicken curry and rice or order momos, you may want to first find out what the birds are fed in the poultry farm where the meat came from.

Broiler poultry is fast replacing free-ranging chicken in markets across Nepal, meaning birds bred in crowded pens have to be fed antibiotics so they don't get infections and grow faster.

Half of broiler chicken meat and eggs in Nepal are estimated to have antibiotic residue. This means people who consume them slowly develop a resistance to antibiotics, and will not respond to treatment of bacterial infections.

An epidemic of anti-microbial resistance is sweeping the world, and scientists say one of the main reasons is the ingestion of antibiotics from poultry products, dairy milk, pork and aquaculture fish.

Common illnesses are turning into potential killers, and surgery can sometimes be fatal because of 'superbugs' that are immune to most antibiotics. Kathmandu hospitals all have patients who are not responding to antibiotic treatment for typhoid, tuberculosis, pneumonia, or common infected wounds.

"Two-third of antibiotics globally is used on animals, and chicken are often fed last resort antibiotics. It may not be a good idea to eat poultry products," advises Buddha

Basnyat, physician at Patan Hospital. Numerous studies in Nepal have shown that antibiotic residue in poultry is finding its way into the human food chain. Poultry farmers use antibiotics not just when their chicken fall sick, but for prevention and also as a growth promoter.

"We know it for a fact that farmers are using antibiotics in poultry as prophylactics to prevent diseases," explains Sameer Mani Dixit of the Centre for Molecular Dynamics Nepal. "We might be getting healthy chicken, but at the cost of resistance that has major public health consequences."

However, the use of antibiotics in poultry farms is going down in Nepal because of a recent law against antibiotic additives in chicken feed, and farmers are now generally more careful about hygiene. Even so, chicken consumption in Nepal has grown several fold in the last decade as living standards rise. Nepalis consume up to 5kg per capita of chicken meat per year, higher than annual consumption per person in India and Bangladesh combined.

A study this year by the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences showed that 94% of the *E coli* bacteria in broiler chicken in Chitwan showed resistance to up to four types of antibiotics. Not only is antimicrobial residue in meat making people resistant to the drugs, but the chicken themselves are contaminated with harmful bugs that are resistant. (See chart, below)

Another study published in the *International Journal of Applied Sciences and Biotechnology* last year showed high

tetracyclin and penicillin residue in 22% of meat samples in Kavre and Kailali districts. Another research by the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science, Rampur, showed that 40% of chicken samples in Gorkha, Parsa, Chitwan and Kathmandu had penicillin residue, while 35% had tetracycline traces, and there were aminoglycosides in 17.5% of the samples.

An earlier study by the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control found that nearly 70% of chicken meat sold in Kathmandu Valley still had ampicillin residue -- with about 17% having concentrations above the permissible threshold.

Although Nepal now has a law against antibiotic additives in feed, the ban is not effective because of the open border with India. A recent expose by the UK-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism titled 'A Game of Chicken: How Indian Poultry Farming is Creating Global Superbugs' revealed lax controls, and a looming superbug epidemic in hospitals across India.

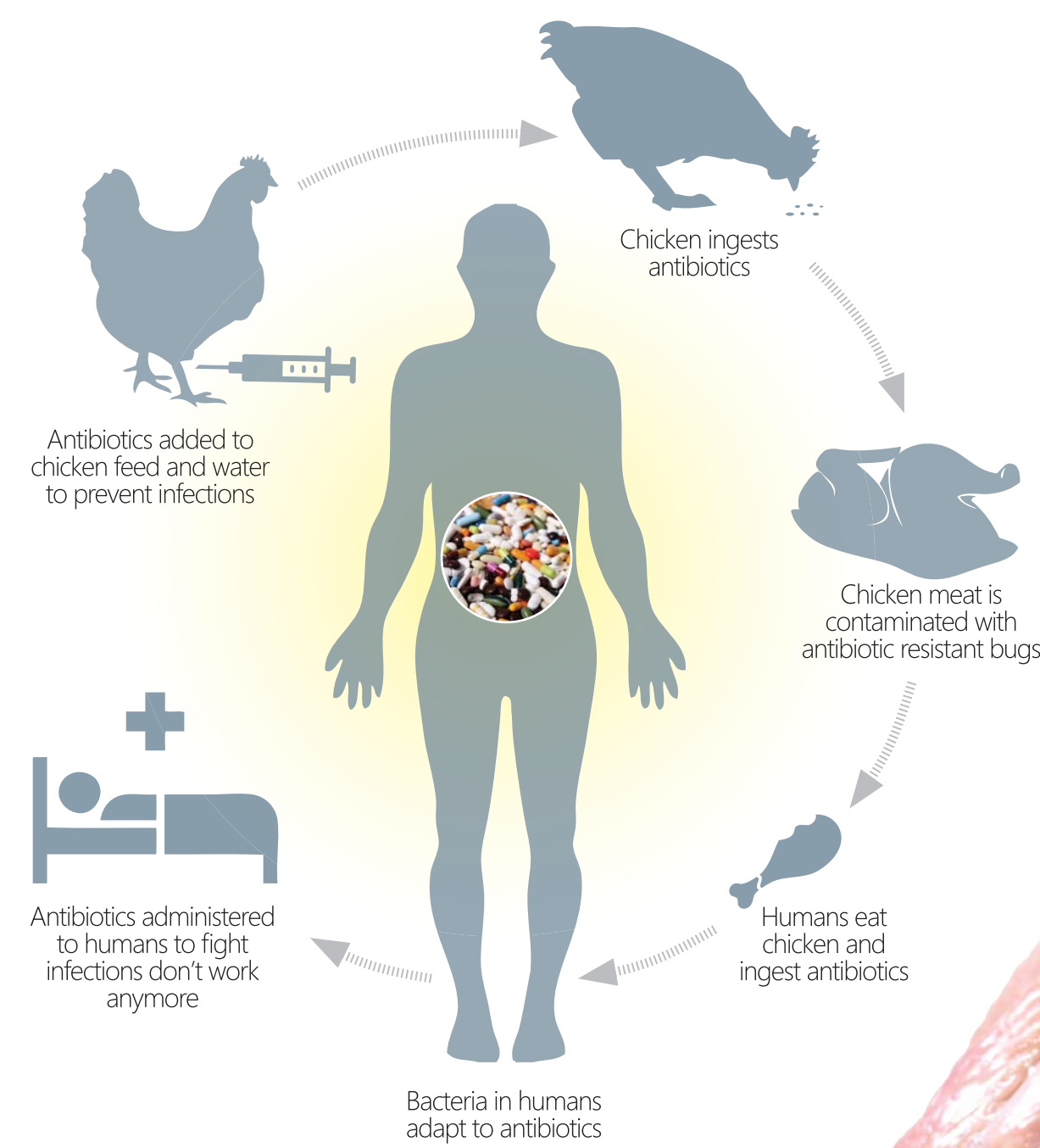
High bacterial disease burden, overuse of human antibiotics, and no regulation on use of antimicrobials in poultry and livestock means India is sitting on a time bomb, scientists say. And right next door, with no border controls, is Nepal.

The British company Venky exported nearly a thousand tons of the 'last hope' antibiotic colistin branded 'Colis V' to India and Nepal in 2016 for use in poultry, according to customs data. WHO has recommended that colistin be restricted in



Are sick chickens?

Antibiotics in
Nepalis resistances
fight infections



IT'S CHICKEN FEED

Poultry farms crowd chicken in pens where they are prone to salmonella and staphylococcus infections which are treated with antibiotics. Many farmers don't wait for the chicken to fall sick, but add antibiotics in feed or water as prophylactic. Over time, this makes the birds resistant to antibiotics, and their meat carry bacteria that can harm humans. People who consume chicken meat with antibiotic residue also develop resistance to 'superbugs' that do not respond to treatment.

Why are chicken fed antibiotics?

- To prevent infections in over-crowded factory farms
- To treat the birds when they fall sick
- It is a cheaper way to make chicken grow faster





you k of ken? poultry make nt to drugs that fections



animals because it is one of the few drugs that can still treat infections in humans. Two Indian companies also manufacture colistin as antibiotics and growth promoters.

The report quoted Timothy Walsh, professor of Medical Microbiology at Cardiff University as saying: “Colistin is the last line of defence. It is the only drug we have to treat critically ill patients resistant to carbapenems. Giving it to chickens as feed is crazy.”

Carbapenems are last resort antibiotics used to fight infections in the bladder, lungs and blood in humans, but more than half of infected patients in India are already resistant to carbapenems and need colistin to get better. Drug resistant infections kill an estimated 58,000 babies in India every year. In Nepal, there is evidence that colistin resistance is spreading among humans (*see graph, below*).

Although European countries have restricted antibiotic use in animal feed, the United States is still using it indiscriminately even though the Atlanta-based Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO have warned about the proven link between antibiotics in animals and antibiotic-resistant infections in humans.

From 2008 to 2016, Nepal’s import of veterinary drugs is estimated to have doubled as poultry farms proliferate to meet demand. An estimated Rs300 million worth of veterinary antibiotics were imported last year, records show. Nepal meets only 15% of its poultry and livestock antibiotic requirement from domestic pharmaceutical companies.

Experts say the government controls on antibiotic additives in animal feed will not work as long as it is allowed in India.

“The trend of antibiotic residue in poultry and resistance in humans won’t stop unless there is a better mechanism to regulate and monitor quality control and sales of drugs,” says Varun Sharma at the Department of Livestock. “Our only hope is to make sure that antibiotics which still work last longer, by regulating their use.”

There is also a need to make poultry farmers aware of the dangers. Many have a misconception that antibiotics prevent infections and promote growth, when it should be given only for treatment. However, Til Chandra Bhattarai of Pancha Ratna Group of Poultry Industries in Chitwan says it is impossible to run a modern poultry business without antibiotics because of the widespread danger of avian infections.

Tika Rai, who runs a poultry farm in Nuwakot that supplies meat to Kathmandu markets, agrees. He urges the government to help with alternatives like probiotics as growth promoters and biosecurity.

“These drugs are a major cost in the business, but we cannot stop using antibiotics. We would lose all our investment if the birds die,” Rai told us.

Farmers are also said to be violating the withdrawal period which requires birds fed antibiotics to be quarantined for a period before being sold. Over-the-counter sales of antibiotics, over-prescription and self-administration in poultry farms all contribute

to spreading drug-resistance in humans.

WHO calls antibiotic resistance the biggest threat to global health. It warns that South Asia is ‘the epicentre’ of the drug resistance crisis, and an epidemic of superbugs in India would engulf Nepal as well.

Many Nepalis already have multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and pneumonia that do not respond to treatment, because of earlier misuse of antibiotics, and from eating chicken raised on antibiotic-laced feed.

Says Sarada Thapaliya, Dean of Veterinary Science and Fisheries in Chitwan: “The restrictive and judicious use of antibiotics in animal feed is the best available solution for now.” 📺



This video about how the abuse of antibiotics in Nepal's poultry industry is making more and more patients develop anti-microbial resistance may convince many readers to turn vegetarian, or raise their own free-ranging chicken.

nepalitimes.com



Banning antibiotics in food animals

The link between anti-microbial resistance in humans and antibiotic use in poultry and livestock is now scientifically proven, and countries around the world have banned their use as growth promoters. Many countries still allow limited use to control poultry epidemics, but enforce a window period after the drugs are administered so the meat does not have drug residue when consumed.

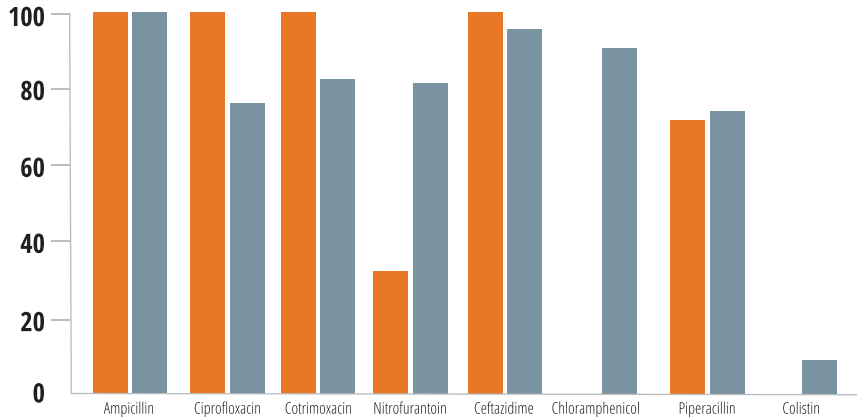
Sweden was the first country to stop animal antibiotic use as growth promoters, in 1986. In 2006, the EU banned all antibiotics used to make animals grow faster. In 2017, the US also restricted antibiotics as feed supplement.

In the Asia Pacific region, antibiotic use in poultry feed is projected to rise by 129%, by 2030, with India and China leading the way because of higher living standards. Bangladesh law in 2010 criminalises antibiotic use as growth promoter in animal feed.

Antibiotics that don't work

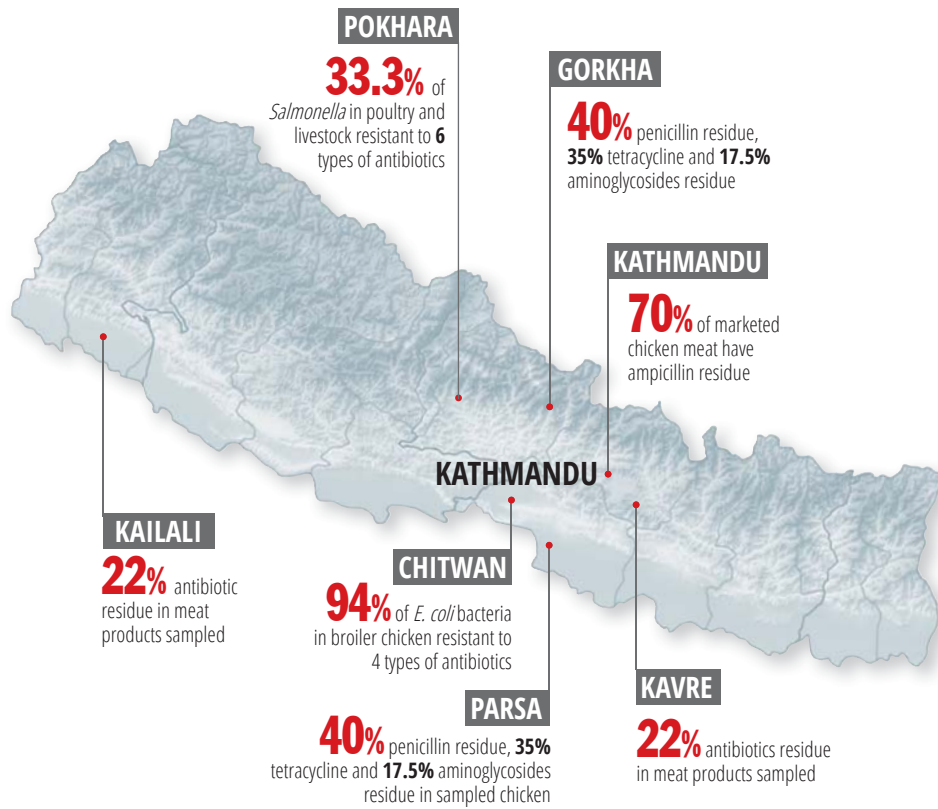
Klebsiella oxytoca and **Klebsiella pneumoniae** are bacteria that cause pneumonia, Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), meningitis, blood and wound infections. Both have developed a resistance to most antibiotics. Even colistin, a last-resort antibiotic, is now ineffective in treating 9% of pneumonia patients in Nepal.

■ Resistance to *K. oxytoca* (in %)
■ Resistant to *K. pneumoniae* (in %)



SOURCE: NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY, AMR SURVEILLANCE, 2016

SPREADING RESISTANCE



GO ONLINE FOR SOURCE OF DATA

EVENTS

MUSIC

DINING

GETAWAY



Hike out

One day hikes, Dhulikhel- Namobuddha- Panauti, on Saturday and Hattiban- Champadevi- Pharping on Sunday for small groups led by a trusted guide. Register online for the package. 26/27May, 6:30am, Outdoor Adventure Center Nepal, Thamel, Rs1,000, (01) 4433515

Magic of Zaffran

Daljit Kaur Sudan's first solo fashion runway showcases her latest collection 'Magic of Zaffran', a blend of traditional and contemporary Kashmiri embroidery design on fabrics from various countries including Nepal. 25 May, 6-9pm, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Tahachal, (01) 4253272

Korean culture week

Korean traditional food exhibition, speech contest, K-pop performances, Korean market and cooking class on Friday and free 6 Korean film screenings from Saturday at QFX. 25/26-29 May, 1-6pm/9am-8pm, Heritage Garden, Sanepa/ Labim mall, Pulchowk (01) 4270172/ (01) 4442220

Attachment

Exhibition of paintings by Prithvi Shrestha, recipient of Himalayan Light Art Award. 25 May-20 June, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, (01) 4218048



Sri Lankan food fest

The world famous Sri Lankan Chef, Dr. Publis Silva and his assistant chef will be part of the Sri Lankan food festival organised by Qatar Airways, Hotel Yak & Yeti, and Embassy of Sri Lanka in Kathmandu. 25 May- 2 June, 6:30-10:30 pm, Sunrise Restaurant, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, Rs2500 (plus taxes), (01) 4248999

Moonshine affairs: Flux

Kaalo. 101 celebrates this month's full moon with a workshop by Yaiyu Manandhar and Michael Gordon who have been experimenting with sugar to create monochrome pieces in public spaces. 29 May, 11am-6pm, Kaalo. 101, Nagbahal, Patan, 980-3553123



Yin Yang yoga

Explore the nature of Yin and Yang through asana, pranayama and meditation on the weekends with Lisa. 26-27 May, 8am-8pm, Pranayama Yoga community, Thamel, 9802045484

Sight and sound

An exhibition featuring sound performance by Graham Blackshaw and Salil Subedi and visual art by Bethany M Richards and Bidhata KC. 27May- 9 June, 5-7am, Chakupat, 9851170110



The Ugly Duckling

Danish author Hans Christian Andersen's classic story The Ugly Duckling told in a different way by director Najir Hussein. 25 May-3 June, 5:30pm (except Mondays), Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar

Nepal then & now

A photography exhibition that juxtaposes historical and contemporary photographs of Nepal, examining the changes in physical and social landscape of Nepal. Opening acts by Raspberry Bush and Bee Numb. Also the place will host a talk on Nepali art and culture by Abhi Subedi at 2pm. 25 May-1 June, 5:30-8:30pm (on opening day), Bikalpa Art Centre, Pulchowk, (01) 5013524



My Kind of Blue

An alternative soul/RnB band from Mumbai, takes influences from Janis Joplin, Hiatus Kaiyote, Ella Fitzgerald and Hozier. Come in for a groovy night that will leave your heart thumping and hip shaking. 25 May, 7-10pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, Rs500 (with beer), Rs 300 (ticket only), (01) 5528362

Binam

Enjoy a night of live indie music by Binam Karmacharya with food and drinks. 16 May, 7-11:30pm, Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, (01) 4256622



Phosphenes

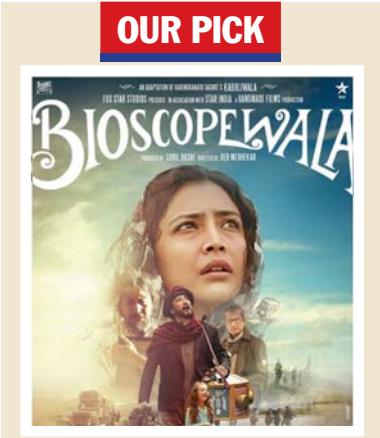
An indie band from Kathmandu speaks to your soul while you enjoy dinner. 25 May, 7-10pm, Pauline's Garden, AaneK marg, Baluwatar, (01) 4221537, 9803919575

Jammin' Thursday

A place to meet fellow musicians, play a few tunes with them, or listen to those making music. This week is a tribute to Miles Davis. 31 May, 7-9pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel, (01) 5528362

Bob Dylan tribute

Celebrate 77th birthday of the legendary musician and song writer Bob Dylan at the continental cafe . 26 May, 5:30pm onwards, The Yard by Oasis Garden Homes, Rs500, 9841386652/ 9801038665



Opens in Kathmandu on 25 May

An adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's Kabuliwala, Bioscopewala is a modern-day story that links India and Afghanistan through life events of three characters. A famous photographer suspiciously goes missing on a flight to Kabul and his daughter, clueless of his purpose of travel, departs on a mission to know the truth. But before that she must find her father's friend, a man who carried around a bioscope telling stories, who once played an important role in her childhood, for he seems to be the missing puzzle piece of this mysterious case. The movie is directed by Deb Medhekar and stars the beloved Danny Denzongpa, Geetanjali Thapa, Adil Hussain and Tisca Chopra in the leads.



Koto

Maki sushi, cold or fried tofu, tempura, fried chicken, miso soup, chicken karage, Katsu Don, anything you want to satisfy your Japanese food craving is available at the restaurant. Darbar Marg, (01) 4220346

Prazada

Enjoy Prazada's selection of chilled draught beers in the lush garden with aromatic food and special pizzas, accompanied by relaxing music on Fridays or a Pop-up market on Saturdays. Baluwatar, (01) 4410473

Bajeko Sekuwa

Barbeque and live music for a summer get-together dinner with friends and relatives. Battispatali, 9801188465, informbaje@gmail.com



Achaar Ghar

Satisfy your cravings for home-cooked meals along with the various choices of pickles prepared using recipes passed down from generations. Enjoy the meal with a refreshing Mizudashi tea served in Champagne glass. Jhamsikhel, Pulchok, (01) 5541952

Sunrise Restaurant

Dine at the restaurant, overlooking the beautifully landscaped gardens and pools. 6:30 to 10:30pm, Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, Rs 4,500, (01) 4248999, reservation@yakandyeti.com.np

1905 Restaurant

Enjoy the live music along with grilled dishes and a fine selection of craft beers and wine. 25 May, Narayan Chaur, Naxal, (01) 4411348



Hotel Annapurna View

The new boutique hotel situated at 1,600m in Sarangkot offers everything: sunrise, the Annapurnas, view of Phewa Lake, serenity, and luxurious accommodation. Sarangkot, Pokhara, (01) 443566

Pataleban Vineyard Resort

An eco-resort with great views, jungle walks, and picnics to rejuvenate from your tedious routine. Chisapani, (01) 4316377, 9841679364, www.patalebanresort.com



Shangri-La Village Resort

Monsoon Madness package at the Resort offers 2 nights and 3 days of excitement, relaxation and cash back coupon worth Rs3,000. Pokhara, Rs7,499, (01) 4412999 / 9861388277

Tranquility Spa

De-stress, relax and pamper yourself to a wide range of massages at any of the spa's nine branches in Nepal. www.tranquilityspa.com.np, (01) 4420424

Retreat at Damaar

A retreat for contemplators and creators in an undisturbed sanctuary to enrich and enlighten your inner self. Bethanchowk, Kavre, 9851052442



Hotel Country Villa

Rise and shine with the weekend sun after a fun evening at the hotel. Nagarkot, (01) 4700305, 9851192106



Health at home is an organization which facilitates home based health care services. Health at home service promotes health care i.e., out of hospital setting to the clients. Being the first of its kind in the whole South Asia, Health at Home is here to cater to the needs of those who desire health care facilities to be delivered at their doorsteps.

Doctor on call Visit by qualified and well experienced doctor generalist.	Nursing Care 24 hours nursing care at home by qualified and experienced professionals.
Lab on Call All kinds of lab related work by professional lab technician.	Physiotherapy on Call Physio/Electro/Acupuncture therapy by qualified and experienced physiotherapist.
Elderly Care Assistant Fine and professional care by our qualified and experienced care giver.	Travel Support for Sick Clients Travel support for sick clients are provided by professional.
Appointment Management Apointment management with required doctors in different hospitals.	Equipment Rental & Drug Supply Drug supply at your doorstep and best quality medical equipments in rent.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 18 - 24 May



Although the air quality has been better due to rains, it is important that vulnerable populations, like children, the elderly, and those with lung and breathing conditions continue to take precautions, especially in the worst times of the day when traffic and construction are at their peak. This week's daily average of the Air Quality Index in Kathmandu city centre showed that pollution levels came down after pre-monsoon showers like on Thursday morning, but quickly climbed again as traffic emissions rose at rush hour. Still, the air is looking much better than during the winter. <https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

We need answers from Communists

Krishna Jwala Devkota in
Naya Patrika, 20 May

नयाँ पत्रिका

Half the world was communist during the Cold War. Today, only five remain: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba. All of them interpret communism in their own ways.

Just like in Nepal today, communists had once won an absolute majority in Cyprus, Guinea and Moldova. But they are now in the opposition. Communists used to be a part of ruling coalitions in the past, in India, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Mali, Peru and Sri Lanka. Today, they are in ruling coalitions only in Venezuela, Chile and Uruguay, but do not have decisive roles.

However, Communist parties continue to exist. India alone has 49 functional communist parties. After suffering humiliating defeats in Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal, communist parties have become object of ridicule in India. In Bangladesh, Communists received only 0.3% of popular votes in the last elections. Even the US has 15 communist parties.

China is a resounding success story of Communism, but Beijing does not export its political ideology any more. It exports only goods.

Never before has a communist party been as strong as the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), born after the much-anticipated unification of UML and Maoists



RSS

last week. Not even non-communist parties have won such a huge proportion of popular votes as the NCP.

In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP received only 33% of popular votes. Trump got 44%. The NCP has an unprecedented opportunity to take Nepal forward. The NCP

is also blessed with a favourable geopolitical situation, with Beijing and Delhi both supporting it.

But the NCP has to deliver on its promises of stability and prosperity. Instead of lecturing or vilifying the opposition NC, the NCP chairs K P Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal have to set their priorities. We need action instead of rhetoric, policies

instead of dreams, and actual programs instead of assurances.

How many people will the NCP make literate? How many jobs will it create? How many will not be landless anymore? By how much will agriculture productivity go up?

The NCP's success will now be measured by economic indicators, and not by hollow promises

and populism. How will the communist government support entrepreneurship? How will it address grievances of a section of Madhesi-Janajatis?

The NCP does not need to be a genuine Communist party. It just needs to evolve into a liberal socialist force which integrates social justice and equity with prosperity. It has to treat democracy as its principle, not a mere policy.

There are already ominous signs that the NCP might not live up to people's hopes. The NCP runs the government not just at the Centre, but also in six of the seven provinces and most local councils. But its elected leaders have already failed. A mayor that puts pressure on police to release those who publicly tortured a young girl on the charge of practicing witchcraft proudly claims to be a Communist. The NCP does not suspend him.

The NCP leadership runs health and education mafia. Who runs the most NGOs involved in harming social harmony? It is the NCP cadre. Are Oli and Dahal ready to dismantle this nexus?

Nepal's Communist movement was founded on the basis of questions, and not answers. It has always been asking: why are most Nepalis poor? Why is there discrimination? Why inequalities? Why dependence on other countries? Seventy years later, Nepal's Communists have reached a position from where they can answer these questions.

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Pacific Rim Uprising

Deadpool 2 is out, and despite its legion of fans, despair permeates my heart when I think of just how stupid the first film really was, despite



MUST SEE
Sophia Pande

being pretty funny. If you liked it, apologies: go ahead and enjoy it – we are all free to do, think and watch as we wish.

However, if I had to pick a sequel, which I did in protest

of *Deadpool 2* in the cinema, I chose *Pacific Rim Uprising* which came out this March as a sequel to Guillermo del Toro's magnificent, heart pounding film *Pacific Rim* from 2013, which was perfect in every way except for a flawed ending. This new, unnecessary installment, produced by del Toro and directed by Steven S. DeKnight, was therefore something I approached with a great deal of trepidation.

Surprisingly enough, despite a slow start that almost made me abandon the film, the film is fairly decent for those who love the genius that made the first film so

riveting. Based on the premise that humans must build gigantic people controlled robots to fight off the monstrous, amphibian-like, but organic Kaiju that emerge from a breach in the Pacific Rim (one that leads to another alien world, don't get me started, that would take another column), the film retains the adrenaline activating glory of seeing two pilots syncing together (or drifting) to control these huge robots. The action of seeing the characters operating these robots is particularly attractive for those who are looking for a new, cooler type of action than what one would normally see in say, *Deadpool 2*.

To return to the film at hand though, the main reason *Pacific Rim Uprising* is so successful is the presence of the very talented John Boyega (lately of Star Wars fame), who plays Jake Pentecost, the son of Stacker Pentecost (played by the great Idris Elba in the first film) – a Jaeger pilot who returns to service when a terrifying new crisis emerges. Caught up in becoming a great pilot like his legendary father, Boyega's character is incredibly likeable and attractive due to his biting British humour, and his relative lack of masculine machismo, a major turn-off in most action movies.

You don't have to see this film in the cinema, you can enjoy it at home. If you want to see on screen, so be it, but if you can't face the smart alecky humour of Ryan Reynolds – magnified manifold by the big screen, then here's an alternative to satisfy your tastes for watchable but not particularly memorable action cinema. 📺



Watch trailer online

nepalitimes.com



GOPEN RAI

PROGRAMMED: President Bidya Bhandari presents the government's policies and programs at the Federal Parliament on Monday.



RSS

ON TRACK: Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Rabindra Adhikari inspects the runway of the much-delayed new international airport in Lumbini on Wednesday, due to be completed next year.



US EMBASSY

OPEN PLATFORM: US Ambassador to Nepal, Alaina B Teplitz, Chief Information Commissioner Krishnahari Baskota and Media Advocacy Group President Babita Basnet discuss the Open Government Partnership.



BUDDHA AIR

WOMEN IN CONTROL: An all female crew flew Buddha Air flights on ATR 72 to Biratnagar and Nepalganj on Wednesday.



NEPAL INVESTMENT BANK

DONE DEAL: CEO of Nepal Investment Bank Jyoti Prakash Pandey (right) and International Finance Corporation Country Head of Nepal Mohammad Rehan Rashid signed a \$5 million agreement to ease the current banking crisis.

पकाउने होइन, रमाउने हो अब

किनकी काठमाडौंका सयौं उत्कृष्ट रेष्टुरेण्टहरुबाट
तपाईंलाई मनपर्ने परिकार डेलिभर गर्न फूडमण्डु हरपल तयार छ ।

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Yesterday's enemies, today's comrades



BIKRAM RAI

Om Astha Rai

The birth of the united Nepal Communist Party (NCP) has left the families of UML cadre killed by Maoist guerillas in an awkward position: they want to pursue truth and justice but the perpetrators are now their leaders.

When the Maoists launched their armed revolution in February 1996, their prime targets were ill-equipped police and NC cadres. They killed, tortured and displaced many local politicians, security personnel and their families, who they labelled 'feudal lords' and 'royal spies'.

However, after forcing most NC cadres out of rural areas, the Maoists began targeting the moderate communist party: the UML. In March 1999, they burnt nine UML cadres alive in Harjang village of Rolpa district.

The UML said 200 of its cadres and local leaders were killed by the Maoists during the war, which only ended with the ceasefire of April 2006. The families of murdered UML leaders who were tortured, kidnapped, murdered and disappeared have been pursuing

justice doggedly — filing court cases and registering complaints with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

However, after UML-Maoist unification last week, the guerrillas they had identified as perpetrators and wanted to see locked up have become their comrades, or even leaders. Some are ready to forgive their ex-foes, others feel helpless, and some want to fight for justice till the bitter end.

Yadu Gautam was one of the first prominent UML leaders to be murdered by the Maoists. He was hacked to death by guerrillas in February 1999 in Rukum. A case filed by his widow, Tirtha Gautam, against local Maoist activists is still pending at the Rukum District Court. His daughter, Sujata Gautam, has registered an application at the TRC.

Tirtha was nominated as an MP by the UML, but the party was dissolved to be merged with Maoists to create the NCP. So, Tirtha is now officially an NCP member of parliament and shares the bench with some of those accused of her husband's murder (pic, above).

Tirtha is careful not to irk



her new comrades by pushing too hard on transitional justice. "My husband firmly believed in the ballot, and those who once believed in bullet have now toed his political line," she told *Nepali Times*. "This is a triumph of the principles he sacrificed his life for."

She says she is ready to move on, forgiving the Maoists and focusing on the journey ahead. "It is not that I have forgotten what they did to my husband, but things are different now, and I cannot keep raking up the past," she says.

Ex-MP Chakra Bahadur Dagora was a popular UML leader in Kailali district. After King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency in 2001, security forces began detaining young Tharu men and women, suspecting them of being rebels. The Maoists saw it as a chance to turn Tharus against the state. But Dagora, himself a Tharu, convinced young men and women from his community to have faith in democracy.

A year after the emergency, in October 2002, Dagora was

AMONG EX-ENEMIES: Tirtha Gautam, now an MP of the united NCP, surrounded by ex-Maoist MPs during a budget session of Parliament on Thursday morning. Her husband Yadu Gautam was executed by Maoists in Rukum in 1999.

Purni Maya Lama's husband Arjun was also killed by Maoists in 2005 in Kavre, has given up hope for justice. (left, below)

kidnapped and killed by Maoists. His wife Parbati Chaudhary was chosen by the UML as a member of Interim Parliament in 2007. She is now a member of the All Nepal Women's Association of UML, which is set to merge with the Maoist women wing.

She says: "I am sad that I will now have to greet the politicians responsible for my husband's murder."

Arjun Lama, a UML cadre in Kavre, was kidnapped, tortured and killed allegedly by a group of Maoists led by senior leader Agni Sapkota in 2005. His wife, Purni Maya Lama (pic, left), has been fighting a lonely battle for justice.

However, after the UML-Maoist unification, she says she has no more courage and energy left. "I feel defeated," she says. "I will now focus on rebuilding my earthquake-damaged house."

But Phadindra Luitel is not ready to give up so easily. His father Guru Prasad Luitel was the Okhaldhunga district president of the All Nepal Teachers Association of the UML when the Maoists abducted him. He was later found hanging from a tree.

"My father's murder was a crime, and it will remain so even after UML-Maoist unification. Those who killed my father cannot get off the hook with the excuse that their old party does not exist," says Luitel, who now runs a foundation in memory of his father.

Conflict victims have always worried about not getting justice, but he says the UML-Maoist unification has just increased their fears.

One ex-UML conflict victim interviewed for this story told *Nepali Times* she can forget the crime and injustice only after she dies. She later asked us to not use that quote, signalling how sensitive talk of wartime justice is in the NCP leadership.

Luitel adds: "In my struggle for justice, I have learnt that nobody really cares about the dead, and everybody just praises the powerful people. But I will not stop fighting even if no one stands by me." 🇳🇵

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Ramadan in exile

Rohingya refugees feel safe in Nepal, but have not given up the dream of returning to Burma

Sewa Bhattarai

It's just a little before 7PM, and there is excitement in the Rohingya camp, a settlement of about 30 tin sheds at Kapan on the northern outskirts of Kathmandu. There is sound of cooking, and an enticing aroma of spicy curry wafts from Jafar Alam's kitchen separated from his bedroom by a partition. "Just one minute left," says a child breathlessly, bringing the message from the makeshift mosque in one corner of the camp. It is the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and the 169 Rohingyas in this camp, one of four refugee neighborhoods, are eager to break their fast.

After an entire day without even a drop of water, Alam, his wife and three children dig into plates of chickpeas and rice.

"Back home in Rakhine, we had a different dish each day during Ramadan," recalls Alam, 27, wistfully. "Goat one day, chicken another, and maybe buffalo the next. That is impossible here, even a kilo of apple costs more than 300 rupees."

Like hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who have fled Rakhine state in eastern Burma to Bangladesh and India and southeast Asia, Alam has horrific tales of persecution in Burma. There are said to be only 318 Rohingyas in Nepal with ID cards, but there may be many more who are undocumented.

"First they told us not to use loudspeakers to call people to *azaan* (prayers). Then they didn't let us

sacrifice animals for our festivals. Then they drove us out of our homes," says Abu Takir, 26, who was in the first wave of Rohingyas to come to Nepal in 2012.

Takir and Alam have friends and relatives scattered all over the subcontinent: some in squalid camps in Bangladesh, some jailed for alleged human trafficking in India. They are relieved they do not face that kind of persecution here, though their life is full of daily struggle because they do not have work permits. Paying the rent on their living space is their biggest struggle at the moment.

Most Rohingya men here

work in construction, which is particularly difficult during the month of fasting. "Back home, nobody worked during Ramadan," says Alam. "Our entire village of Riyaz Uddin Fara gathered in our huge 45-pillar mosque to celebrate Iftar."

Alam does not feel like going to the improvised mosque here, and says the community cannot afford a big evening feast for everyone.

In a small tin shed which was designated a mosque, some men still gather to break their fast with fruit, and pray as the sun sets. Jame Masjid in Bagbazar has helped by sending a teacher who guides the

rituals and offers spiritual support.

Other than complaints from neighbors when they sacrifice buffaloes, the Rohingya say they face no other problems regarding religion. "The good thing about being in Nepal is that all the religions are equal here," say Takir and Alam together. "Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, they are all free to practice their faith."

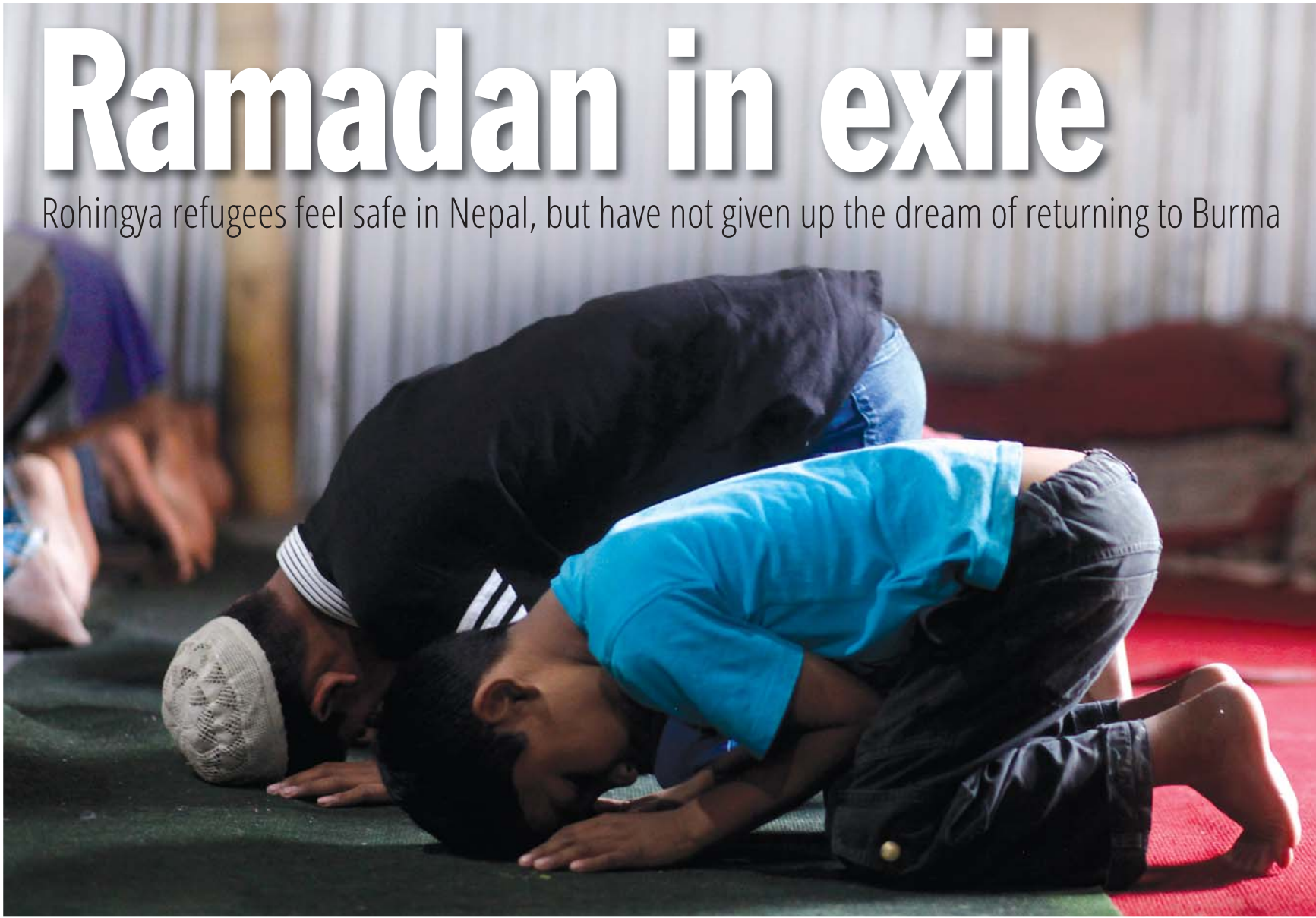
Though they finally feel safe as Muslims, they have no wish to stay in Nepal longer than they have to. But they have no long term plans to seek asylum or citizenship anywhere.

"Why would we want to be

labourers, when we have acres of land back home?" asks Takir, wearing a Burmese sarong and speaking in halting, accented Nepali. "If all was well in our country, there is nowhere else we would rather be."

His only worry at the moment is that the children will be stateless. Rohingya children have blended right in, speaking fluent Nepali which they learn in school. Noor Kalima Begum, 11, is in Grade 4 and her best friends are Nepali classmates.

She says: "We had orchards full of mangoes, guavas, and jackfruits. We did not have to



There are Muslims in Tibet, too

Tibet's Muslims settled in Nepal in waves, but they all have one thing in common: Ramadan

Duksangh Sherpa





BIKRAM RAI

ROHINGYA RAMADAN



Go online to watch video of the families of Rohingya refugees in Kathmandu observing Ramadan away from home, as they struggle to raise their families in enforced exile. Although safe now, they miss their Burmese homes most at festival time.

nepalitimes.com


Lindsey A Hedges

The arrival of Rohingya refugees in Nepal earlier this year was just the latest wave of the Muslim group fleeing violent persecution in Burma – in fact hundreds of Rohingya families have fled to Nepal each time there is a fresh crackdown by the military.

The Rohingya have made harrowing and sometimes treacherous journeys across from Burma to Bangladesh and India and into Nepal, finding this country by far the most hospitable to them. The first wave of refugees six years ago sent word back to those fleeing the latest violence that Kathmandu was a safe bet.

In fact, Muslim refugees are not new to Nepal. After the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, Bihari Muslims were hunted down for collaborating with the Pakistanis and many thousands fled to India and Nepal. This country also has a reputation for not turning away refugees, having given sanctuary to Tibetans in the 1950s, more than 100,000 Bhutanese, and later even refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

The Rohingya today have been called the most persecuted minority in the world, and started arriving in Kathmandu in 2012, while others have come as recently as six months ago. For most refugees like 15-year-old Sahat, Kathmandu is safe because “there are no checkpoints” and he can move freely.

Sahat has big dreams to go

Living on the margins



LINDSEY A HEDGES

to university, but with no refugee status this may be difficult. Though they are safe and free from violence, some say their quality of life has deteriorated since their time began in Nepal.

The Rohingya established themselves in a flat in Kathmandu when they first arrived overland via Bangladesh and India, but the rent became too expensive. At the time the UNHCR was helping families with education and medical costs. However, since December 2016 UNHCR has dropped the funding, claiming it would rather see the community become ‘self-sufficient’.

That is something the Rohingya are striving for, but their lack of refugee status makes it difficult to get by in an overcrowded and under-resourced camp in Kapan (pictured, above). They try to

survive day-to-day, working as carpenters and plumbers to be able to afford food, water and medicines. Because of the earthquake, there is a demand for construction workers.

Noor Jahan is a young mother who is happy her children are doing well in school, but says she has to sometimes send them hungry to school. Rohingya children being raised here in Nepal have integrated well into local schools, learning Nepali and helping parents communicate.

Saitara, a mother of two, is happy her husband has found work even though it is in reconstructing homes in Gorkha and he can come home only once a fortnight. His absence has added strain to an already burdensome life. The workers say they are paid less than Nepalis doing similar work.

The Nepal government strategy seems to be to let the Rohingyas be, leave them to their own devices, allow them to stay and work as long as they do not become too dependent on the state. Many have hopes of receiving official refugee status, at least for their children.

The community has arrived bearing the weight of physical and emotional trauma, they are stateless, fighting disease, and the pain of loss. Though the Rohingya of Nepal have a hard road ahead of them, they are all grateful for the community they have been able to build in Kapan, even though it is made up of tin sheds. By leaning on one another they have been able to survive in attempts to make a better life for their future generations. 🇳🇵



GOPEN RAI

HAVING FAITH: Ahmed Dulla with his 20 month old daughter Meherin, enjoying his iftar meal after fasting all day (*far left*).

Abdul Rehman works in his jewellery boutique in Thamel, which he started 28 years ago.

Both are Tibetan Muslims who have made Nepal their home, and devoutly observe Ramadan like Muslims elsewhere.

Tibetan Muslims in Lhasa were always allowed to freely practice their religion. But after the Chinese annexation in 1950, most Muslims migrated to Nepal and India with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans.

“Business was always good in Tibet, and it was booming even during the Cultural Revolution. The political tension did not hamper our trade, but we moved out of Tibet because of concern for our religion,” recalls Abdul Rehman, 68, who was born in Lhasa but moved to India in the 1960’s. After university, he moved to Kathmandu 28 years ago to start his own jewellery business in Thamel.

Returning from afternoon prayers at Jame Masjid, as he settled down in his antique jewellery boutique, Rehman echoed the feeling of most Tibetan Muslims in Nepal: “In all these years, I have never ever been made to feel like an outsider here in Nepal. The tourist business is good, and the people too are very friendly.”

There are about 120 Tibetan Muslim families in Kathmandu, of which some like Rehman are of Kashmiri ancestry who moved to Kathmandu for trade and business. Tibet, Nepal and India have always shared a special connection because of interlinked trade which translated into new communities such as Tibetan Muslims who trace their ancestry

mainly to Kashmir and Ladakh.

Tibetan Muslims in Nepal are further categorised as ‘Khache’ (from Kashmir and hold Indian passports) and ‘Khazar’ (who have Nepali ancestry and nationality). The only difference between the two is that the Khache regard the Dalai Lama as the Tibetan leader and mark his birthday. Most of them have now intermarried, blurring the distinction.

Ahmed Dulla, 30, born in Nepal, belongs to the ninth generation of Tibetan Muslims. His family moved from Lhasa to Kathmandu in the 1970’s, because their ancestors were from Nepal. Dulla studied in India and returned eight years ago to start a shoe business. His wife Bushra Yusuf is a Tibetan Muslim of Kashmiri ancestry.

“We Tibetan Muslims have relatives all over. We still have family in Lhasa, Ladakh, Kashmir, and in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. It is only geographically that we are apart, otherwise we are all the same, culturally and religiously,” Dulla tells us.

Dulla’s uncle Karimullah, 55, was born in Lhasa and moved to Kathmandu in 1969. His grandfather was a Nepali Hindu who worked at the Nepal Consulate in Lhasa, and grandmother was a Nepali Buddhist. They both converted to Islam while in Tibet and mingled with the Muslims there.

Despite being a small group, Kathmandu’s Tibetan Muslims are a strong, tightly-knit community who this month are observing Ramadan like Muslims all over the world, not eating all day and breaking their fasts after sundown with a feast.

“The purpose of Ramadan is to purify your thoughts and have control over yourself. It helps bring self awareness within us,” says Dulla as he eats the day’s first meal of dates, kebabs, curries and desserts like *sewai* and *khir*. 🇳🇵

Mention Tibet, and the first thing that comes to mind is the Dalai Lama and Buddhism. However, Muslims have been as much a part of the fabric of Tibetan culture as their Buddhist counterparts.

It is hard to distinguish Muslim Tibetans from their Buddhist compatriots since they share the same language, food, clothing, culture and heritage. Tibetan Muslims have also contributed to the preservation of Tibetan culture wherever in the world they have settled. It is only their faith that sets them apart.

Historically, Muslim traders from Kashmir and Ladakh settled in Tibet in the 17th

century, during the time of the fifth Dalai Lama. They were granted permission to build mosques and have burial ground along with other privileges such as being able to buy land and continue their trade. They started marrying Tibetan Buddhist women, who later converted to Islam. As the community expanded, it later included Tibetans of Nepali origin.

Lhasa still has four mosques, the first of which Bada Masjid was built in 1716 with a smaller one built in the 1920s. The remaining two mosques are in Gyangda Linka, where the burial ground is located. There are two more mosques in Xigatse and Changdu.

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Those were the days

The merger of Mau-Mau and the Eh-Males is a huge loss to Nepal's dream of one day attaining Communist Utopia, and to preserving biodiversity. Consolidating the two Bolshies into one monolithic leftie party means we have lost their tactic of establishing a classless society by blowing up classrooms. ("To read too many books is harmful": actual Mao Zedong quote.)

Many of us feel let-down and are nostalgic that we couldn't take a revolution we started to its logical conclusion, and abandoned the bloodshed halfway. Our Commies couldn't even blockade the country themselves, like everything else they needed the Indians to do it for us.

We bid a fond goodbye to the glory days when Kathmandu Valley would be under a Maoist siege for weeks on end. We will miss all the excitement of highway ambushes, skirmishes, petrol tankers being blown up with petrol bombs, and arson attacks on school buses with students in them. Who is going to carry out summary executions and bowtick carbuys, now that the Communists have merged with the Counter-revolutionaries? It is painful for us in Nepal to witness the downfall of the once-fearsome ex-gorillas who fought ruthlessly for the liberation of the people, brought us international fame, and put Nepal firmly on the world map.

The halcyon days when the end justified the means are now only a distant memory. We abandoned the proletariat whom we promised we would purge the bourgeoisie and bring about the downfall of running dog capitalists and their imperialist henchmen and henchwomen. Comrade Awesome is now just Comrade Someone.

Under the Maoists, there was absolute certainty that you could not make an omelet without breaking eggs and figuring out if they came before chickens, so that we could count them before they hatched. And that is what we will miss the most: the other great sayings of the Great Helmsperson, like:

- "A revolution is not a dinner party, it is a bloody orgy."
- "Political power flows out of double barrels of whiskey."
- "War is politics with bloodshed of the toiling masses."
- "Let a hundred flowers bloom before we pluck them."
- "The people are the sea, and the revolutionaries are fishy."
- "The party can't advance without making mistakes, and we intend to make many more of them."
- "All reactionaries are paper tigers with aphrodisiac properties."
- "A thousand mile journey begins with the first national shutdown."



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