Rival factions of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) are heading for a showdown on the streets, even as the Supreme Court continues to hear arguments for and against Prime Minister K P Oli’s dissolution of the House.

On Thursday, the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led faction of the NCP enforced a nationwide shutdown that for many harked back to the instability of past. There was outrage on social media against arson attacks and vandalism.

The real purpose of the shutdown appears to have been to prevent government supporters from travelling to Kathmandu for a planned rally on Durbar Marg on Friday. Oli’s supporters on Wednesday staged “the biggest ever” motorcycle rally in Nepal, creating monstrous traffic jams.

In fact, the two factions seem to also be competing to make the lives of citizens as miserable as possible.

Oli and Dahal are engaged in a high-visibility show of force in their rallies. The Dahal faction claimed to have brought 100,000 people to its demonstration near Tundikhel on 22 January, while the Oli group is aiming to muster 200,000 on Friday. Dahal is responding with another rally in Kathmandu on 10 February.

“Our rallies are to mobilize the people for elections. Make no mistake, there will be elections,” says Ananda Pokhrel, chair of the NCP’s Magnum Council. A show of strength is also the intention of Dahal and his ally Madhav Kumar Nepal–out for elections, but to demonstrate public support while the Supreme Court deliberates on the House dissolution, and the Election Commission decides which faction will get the NCP flag and symbol.

“Our rallies are to show public support against the repressive and anti-constitutional move by the prime minister, and we will continue our protests until the House is restored,” says Dahal-Nepal supporter Pampha Bhusal.

Aside from the show of strength on the streets, leaders from both sides have been using increasingly abusive, and derogatory language against each other.

“Crowned and isolated by the Dahal-Nepal faction and the support it has from media and civil society, Oli has planned the optics well–er raised platform at the gates of Narayanhiti, hinting at support for restoring a Hindu monarchy. Oli himself has been sending out-so-subtle signals. In an interview with Zee News last month, he expounded at considerable length about Nepal’s Vedic past.”

This week, he made a high profile visit to Pushpawati to offer prayers, and sanctioned 14 kg of gold to decorate the shrines at a cost of Rs 4 billion. In Clujwan, he reiterated the theory that Ram was born in Nepal.

Analysts have also taken the Nepali Army’s decision to conduct a drill on the King Road with an APC parade on 1 February as a symbolic warning on the day of the military coup in Iran, and King Gyanendra’s coup in 2005.

Also this week, Home Minister Ram Babu Thapa paid a visit to Nakhu Suli, ostensibly on an inspection. But he made no effort to hide his meeting with imprisoned former Maoist comrades of the underground splinter faction.

All this is happening while the Supreme Court is debating 13 writ petitions against Oli’s dissolution of the House, as well as multiple contempt of court petitions against Oli, Dahal, Nepal and other leaders.

CP Mainali of the NCP (ML) doubts that the prime minister will use the Hindu monarchy card: “Oli is just using opposition to secularism and federalism to gain votes, he is not going to declare a Hindu state or call for a restoration of monarchy. He is perfectly capable of pulling another rabbit out of the hat.”

Mukesh Pokhrel

Nepali Ama

EDITORIAL

PAGE 2

AIR AMBULANCE

SAVES MOTHERS

PAGE 14-15
Nepali Ama

There are many reasons cited for the sharp reduction in Nepal’s maternal mortality rate (MMR), from 991 per 100,000 live births to less than 240 today. Making them is the presence of trained community health volunteers even in the remotest village, and the growth of an extensive network that allows women with complicated pregnancies to be taken to hospital. Perhaps the greatest factor is the rise in female literacy in the same period, which in turn reduced the incidence of fertility rates, and raised the average age of marriage through awareness and empowerment.

However, an MMR of 240 is still unacceptable — it translates into 3 deaths at childbirth every day, 1,200 every year. For comparison, only two mothers out of 100,000 die at childbirth in Norway, and the figure for Sri Lanka is just 30.

Besides, Nepal has to reduce its MMR to 70 to fit the next five years to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals target. The country has already failed to attain the interim target of reducing MMR to 125 by 2020.

The worrying thing is that the graph for maternal mortality has now flattened, mainly because government hospitals in the districts are under-equipped, understaffed and under-funded. Many other children cannot afford delivery in private hospitals.

The latest figures for 2020 have not come in yet, but the Covid-19 crisis has certainly increased the maternal mortality rate because few women could have had institutional deliveries. In fact Nepal’s first Covid-19 fatality in May was a mother from Sindhupalchok who died after giving birth, but her family could not get an ambulance to take her to hospital during the lockdown.

Yet, if we probe the reasons for past progress it will show us the path forward. One of the factors contributing to a reduction in maternal mortality since 1990 was that the percentage of skilled birth attendants in rural health facilities went up from 4% to 53%.

In the meantime, as the Sagol-Samy report shows, the President’s Program for Women’s Upilitation has been conducting free emergency airlifts of post-partum mothers in remote areas in both life- and death-situations at childbirth. (See page 14-15).

The eligibility criteria are complicated for families who do not know how to seek the system, but in the past two years, the program has conducted 175 emergency services and saved the lives of many mothers and babies.

Improvement in this is not a sustainable way forward. The focus should be on decentralizing medical care and making it the responsibility of private health facilities and municipal governments.

The emphasis must be on primary health care that can prevent communicable diseases through awareness, and carry out common surgeries like broken bones, and cataract surgeries at the local level.

We have seen how hospital buildings are not enough, those structures need basic equipment like x-ray machines, ultrasound scanner, and capnol, medicated medical staff to use them.

Mistreatment by hospital staff is common and poor ethical standards that can affect women’s health. A family physician who can perform basic gynecological services, deliveries including c-sections, can be a better option than the specialist with expensive equipment that few can afford.

Nepal should already have a policy on helping women in meeting the MMR target by 2030, and we hope to meet the goal by time to action. Focus must be made on the hotline for maternal deaths, including those that occurred in the last days in the districts in Far-western and Karnali Province, and Province 2 with community-based midwives training and district hotline facilities to have life-saving services 24/7.

So far, we have seen no visible strategy or a sense of urgency on the part of the Ministry of Health to meet the SDG target on reducing the maternal mortality rate. In the past year, Covid-19 has slowed much of the oxygen out of even existing efforts to upgrade medical care to make it more affordable and accessible. Pilot health insurance schemes are isolated success stories.

The story of 31-year-old Rejaya Nepali (pseudonym of Reji), an employee of Reja Group, encapsulates the human tragedy of many women who have to give up their lives to give birth to new lives.

Nepal Times reported last year how the mother of four in a remote village in Bajura was taken to a stretcher to a nearby health post after prolonged labour. She gave birth along the way to a baby boy. But there was no one to take care of her newborn. Nepali had to be carried to the house of an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. She died along the way.

Three other mothers died during childbirth in just one Bajura village during the month of November.

Lightroom Conversation

The second image of Lightroom Conversation looks like another example of Bajura’s woman’s role in the village. The whole image is quite well-balanced and the overall composition is good. The background is in contrast with the foreground, creating a good visual effect. The image is slightly overexposed, but overall it looks good. The image quality is very good.

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Full story on page 7

QUOTE

“We’ve had conversations with Denver Art Museum about the provenance of Umap- Maheshvar. They’ve claimed that the evidence from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan is not enough. But we are working on identifying different objects in all of Nepal. In the words of the Denver Art Museum, we continue to have confidence in the provenance of the piece. ‘And, it is ununknown of any substantiated claims of theft of this piece.’”

—Prunea Rana R L

Nepal Pride Project

The next image of Nepal Pride Project looks like a picture of a group of people sitting on a bench. The composition is good, and the image is well-focused. The background is slightly blurred, which makes the subject stand out. The image is slightly overexposed, but overall it looks good.

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Rejaya Nepali died aged 33, while giving birth to a baby in a Bajura village last year. Nepal Times now takes care of the baby and is raising Rejaya’s three other small children.

A Nepali girl comforts her mother while she is undergoing chemotherapy at a hospital. The image is quite well-balanced and the overall composition is good. The background is in contrast with the foreground, creating a good visual effect. The image is slightly overexposed, but overall it looks good. The image quality is very good.

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Kathmandu creeps up

Valley’s urban sprawl into watershed depletes aquifers, triggers landslides

Mukesh Pokhrel

As Kathmandu reaches the limits to its growth with nearly every square metre now built up, developers are moving to the slopes on the Valley’s rim to set up housing colonies. This is affecting the aquifers, and increasing risk of landslides for residents.

Gokarneswar is located directly below the forests of Shivapuri National Park and nearby Sandakpur, the source of fresh water for much of Kathmandu. These villages had perennial springs that fed household taps and irrigated fields.

In the past, the springs have all gone dry. Residents blame it on real estate developers moving in with heavy machinery and clearing up the slopes into plots for new housing colonies.

“I am 60, and I have never seen the springs go dry, even if there is a trickle, it is all costly,” says Sambhu Upreti. More than 200 families of Ward 2 and 3 of Gokarneswar face water shortages, and many are thinking of moving out.

Locals say the developers have bought terraced farms, and churned up on dry streams and community-owned land. After the trees were cut and excavators tore up the slopes, the last monsoon saw destructive landslides. This has affected the groundwater that used to replenish the springs at the base of the Shivapuri.

When a team from Nepali Times visited the village of Gokarneswar last week, excavators belonging to real estate developer Dipak Bista were gouging out the slopes. After laying the land, the contractor first mixes the sand and gravel stones to sell to construction companies in the city, and then plows out the property to sell to individual buyers.

“Till two years ago these slopes were all green,” says another local Ramkumari Bista. “It was after the developer tore up the slopes above us that the springs went dry.”

The steep slopes are made up of sand on top of bedrock, both of which are valuable for contractors. Once the terrace farms are levelled, the slope is cleared up with sand bags and sold, even though it is still too steep and unstable to build houses on.

“So far, we have mostly suffered from springs going dry, but the mountains above us is now so unstable, we dread the landslides that are sure to happen in the monsoon,” says Madhu Ram Bista, a resident of the neighbouring village of Bhumising.

Even in the 2020 monsoon, the Suryabinayak River burst its banks after moderate rains led to slope failure. Shankar Bista, 65, says a patch mixture of sand and water flowed down the mountain and washed away everything in its path.

“We are increased sediment load in rivers, and without tree cover the water does not seep into the ground but runs off, causing a lot of damage,” says Ramchandra Bista, a professor at Pulchowk Engineering Campus, who has been researching landslides on the valley rim for the past 20 years.

Along with Gokarneswar, the phenomenon of contractors mining and quarrying the mountains and then selling the property for houses is going on at the base of mountains all around the Valley, in Chandragiri, Budhanilkhan, Godawari, Lele, Nagarkot, and elsewhere.

“This rampant destruction is affecting the nature and ecosystem, making slopes unstable and reducing the recharge of the Valley’s underground aquifers,” says researcher Adhikari.

There has not been a comprehensive study of Kathmandu Valley’s groundwater, but a Japanese research project in 1994 concluded that the northern end of the Valley was critical for groundwater recharge. The study showed Kathmandu Valley could sustainably pump out only 20 million litres of groundwater, but the city is already extracting 70 million litres a day through pumps and deep tube wells. That study led to the establishment of the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park to protect the watershed. However, the unchecked destruction now taking place at the edge of the park and in the buffer zone will reduce monsoon recharge, and lower Kathmandu Valley’s water table, which has already been depleted by over-extraction.

“The northern fringes of the Valley are made up of sandy slopes and forests which absorb rainwater and let it percolate into the ground, but all this construction is affecting the seepage,” says retired Tribhuvan University professor and water management engineer Ashoksh Shukla.

Locals in Gokarneswar say they have taken up the water shortage issue with their mayor Sunita Chalise many times, but nothing has been done. In fact, they suspect the mayor himself is in partnership with real estate developers.

“The contractors get permission to flatten slopes for housing, and do whatever they like,” says Buddh Bista, a local. “If the mayor wanted, he could have stopped them then and there. It is hard to believe that he is not hand in glove with the developers.”

Excavators lay on the fringes of Shivapuri National Park last week. Resident Shankar Bista (right) says springs have gone dry and there is risk of landslides.
surrounding mountains

Chair of Ward 3 Rajendra Bhandari also noted that whenever he takes the complaints of the people to the municipality, they do not want to listen. “I have written to the ministry in Kathmandu, to the municipality, to the national park, but no one is listening,” says Bhandari.

We asked Mayor Chalise why all this was happening during his watch, but he instead blamed locals for selling off property to real estate speculators for quick cash. “If I try to stop them selling their land, they oppose me. If I let them sell, they blame me. None of the contractors have encroached on any community land,” Chalise said.

“The locals sell the land, they are the ones driving the buyers, they are responsible,” he said.

Last week, a team made up of the Kathmandu CEO, District Coordination Committee, the National Park conservation chief made an inspection visit. CEO Kali Punjali ordered an immediate stop to the excavation of the slopes. When we took him, the House Ministry stopped it and the excavation has stopped for now.

Locals suspect the encroachment will resume as soon as the gate of official homes elsewhere. “We do not want the destruction to stop, we want the proprietors to be penalised,” says Buddhi Bista.

Laxman Poudel of the National Park says: “The slopes do not fall within the park boundary, but because of the impact on the watershed, we have written to the local government to immediately stop this destruction. It is now up to them.”

Bagmati Civilisation

Even with the imminent arrival of Suntarjani water through a 26 km tunnel from Makwanpur, Kathmandu Valley’s population has grown so rapidly that it will not be enough to meet demand.

What is new is that the government has started building its intentions on the Bagmati Basin, with a focus on improving the Shivapuri National Park, the construction of which can be clearly seen in recent Google images. The head of the project, Bisweshwar Pratap Singh, said the completed project will include 26 high rock and concrete dam that can store up to 500,000 cubic meters of water. When construction is complete this year, the reservoir will discharge up to 400 liters per second to replenish and flush the Bagmati. The Bagmati Conservation Integrated Development Committee will then build another reservoir downstream on the Bagmati. Project engineer Nishchal Chaudhary says the environmental impact assessment of the Mol 513 million project is now under way.

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Niranjan Kunwar: Queering the story

Niranjan Kunwar: There’s a story that my maternal grandmother used to tell us kids. It was about a boy who was very kind to animals. Whenever he passed by a small farm, he would give some food to the animals. One day, he was passing by a farm and he saw a little lamb that was sick. He took the lamb home and cared for it. The lamb grew strong and healthy. Soon, the boy’s mother found out and she was very happy. She gave her son a big reward. The boy was very happy and thanked his mother for her kindness. From that day on, the boy always took care of the animals whenever he saw them.

Muna Gurung: Tell me more about Chitwan. Where is it?

We have an old house there and my grandmother would visit regularly. We would go on a local bus, the roads were bad and I would get seasick. But despite that, I would fight with my parents if they didn’t let me go with them. There was no electricity in the village and I liked that because we would eat under the light from a lantern and these were delicious little kathis, which was pulled nice and fried in butter. I realized that I feel calmer in nature and it was a striking juxtaposition with my life in New York City.

I will share a story of a boy from my village. He was the only boy in his family and his father had简便地将这篇文档翻译成英文。

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Kabi Raj Lama was a student in Tokyo when Japan was hit by the Great Sendai Earthquake that set off a deadly tsunami in 2011. Nearly 15,000 people were killed. As he watched the disaster ravage families and property, the scenes became deeply etched in his mind. He did not know at that time that it was going to reflect in his art.

"The disaster made me think about life. When I saw houses collapse and people die, I wondered about unfulfilled dreams. The trauma left a hollow inside me and I had to find a way to fill it, so I started sketching," recalls Lama.

At the Mie University Centre of Art and Design in Tokyo, he spent much of his time sketching his memory. "I documented my traumas in sketches and photographs to overcome it. And as a student of lithography, I turned those into prints," he says.

Some of his work went on to be exhibited in Tokyo’s Senzaboku Gallery in 2012, where Lama’s work received attention from Japanese professors, artists, and collaborators.

"In Japan, print-making is a tradition, so the visitors were curious about my work. They asked me about print culture in Nepal and if I would be continuing doing it," says Lama.

Back in Nepal in 2013, he experienced the second great earthquake of his life. Along with memories revived by the disaster, he was dealing with the state of being "unstudied." He had also lost friends and felt like the chances in his mind needed organizing.

He turned to sketching again, and started sketching heritage sites in Nepal to document the earthquake’s aftermath for which he set up a studio close to his home in Boudha.

The place has an industrial feel about it — the white walls and the high ceiling give an airy impression of space. In the centre is a press machine, there are litho stones propped up on a pedestal. There are stacked-up canvases, papers, tools and a yellow colour lab that draws the space together like it is a throbbing heart.

"I have been using the studio not just to create art, but also to meet other artists and to teach," says Lama.

"Working space matters because if you are in familiar space, it can transport you to another zone."

When Nepal went into lockdown in March 2020, Lama finally found the quiet he was looking for. Working hours on end without having to entertain anyone, the studio was where he worked, ate, slept.

"I had been stockpiling material and had time. I had been planting techniques," and so Lama started working on a new series involving wood, stones and copper plates.

One of the prints he made during the lockdown is of that of the Bishwarupa. He had always been fascinated by the temple in the Patan Durbar Complex where statues were heavily damaged during the 2015 earthquake, an image of which circulated on Facebook. Lama used it to recreate an energy exuded by the figure.

"The Bishwarupa is a powerful image with its thousand bands, and it took me months to finish. I like to gaze at it for hours," he says, looking proudly at his creation.

With print-making, Lama tends to invest more observation in details. The idea of creation is associated with a barrenness that clouds him before he starts, almost like a gestation period. His research entails looking up historical archives, work done by other artists on the topic and relevant references. "I collect them, I pull together ideas and make sketches."

After the sketches are done, he picks from the choice of his techniques — lithography, cutting and etching — depending on which fits the sketch best. As opposed to a more prolific time when he was working on canvas, Lama has learned that putting more thought into what he creates, gives him more satisfaction.

"There are so many variations in tools and even if I change chemicals a little, the outcome is different. Nothing small things is like meditation for work," he explains.

Apart from creating, Lama is promoting his studio as a resource for those who want to learn about lithography. He says it is all about trusting relevance.

"In News culture, we have the Chitrakar who do blocks. Rangitkark work with dye. We have Tibetan influenced, flags in print. We just need to identify and create a printmaking curriculum," says Lama, who explains that print is also connected to education and industry.

"When there was no offset press, people printed manually: newspapers, religion, entertainment. We’ve always depended on manual printing. But they have evolved, and if we set up community studies, we could teach children to do that. It’s the only way to preserve art."

Kabi Raj Lama's solo exhibition, "Colors of Imagination," will be on display at Siddharta Art Gallery from February 13 onwards for a month.

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#KabiRajLama #GarvaKaSaathNepali

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[Image] A video showcasing Kabi Raj Lama's work. The captions read: "Kabi Raj Lama is a contemporary printmaker, who is drawing inspiration from the rich history of Nepali art and culture through his innovative and diverse works. His pieces reflect a unique blend of traditional motifs and modern techniques, making them a significant contribution to the global art scene."
Protecting Lumbini’s Sarus Cranes

Rajendra Sowal

T he region around Lumbini is an important wildlife habitat, but facing an imminent threat because of increases in industrial pollution, urbanisation and mechanised farming. A World Heritage Site associated with the life of the Buddha, it is home to a diversity of farm-dependent biodiversity and is designated as an important Bird Area by Bird Life International. The fields and river channels provide an important habitat for many species and serve as a corridor for animal movement.

The area is marked with oxbow lakes formed by Tawi river such as Bhasmeshwar, Tawi, Gangi and Tolar which overflow into floodplains during the monsoon, but are usually dry rest of the year. These lakes are important wetland and are home to a number of species of waders, amphibians, turtles, snakes and mammals, such as the Blue Bull antelope, and Sarus Cranes are monogamous birds, and one of the unique species found in Lumbini, owing to their legendary connection with the Buddha, under whom Prince Siddhartha of the Kingdom of Kapilvastu was born.

Kushaha, the area’s largest lake, is supposed to have received a wounded crane during the Buddha’s lifetime, which is why the lake is known as the ‘Devadutta’. In a statement that becomes the symbol for modern-day conservation, King Siddhartha then declared that the bird belonged to the one who saved it. Many historic images show the Buddha in the presence of the crane, and this belief helped this non-migratory species have been living in the Nepal Tarai for over two millennia.

The Sarus Crane has become symbolic of a way of life that values all forms of life and the deep connection it has. Also regarded as ‘Swin ka Roja’ meaning ‘Royal of the Wetlands’, the tallest of flying birds, Sarus Cranes hold a special relationship with the former of Lumbini as their presence in the wetland is believed to be indicative of healthy wetlands, a harbinger of good crops. The birds are protected by the community and have been named the mascot by the Lumbini Cultural Municipality.

Much like the Sarus Crane, Kala Namak (black salt rice) holds unique allure for its association with the Buddha. Known as ‘Buddha’s rice’, the crop holds a cultural significance in the people of Kapilvastu, who consider it a holy gift. After his enlightenment, Buddha is said to have distributed black rice to his people as a gift and a mark of Borg at the fields where the black rice grew also serves as a feeding habitat for Sarus Cranes and other birds in the post monsoon season. However, the growing hybrid rice varieties have almost completely replaced them in recent times, with only a few farmers continuing to grow the isolated paddy.

Driven by this spiritual link, Lumbini has taken steps in protecting critically endangered species and their habitat. The Lumbini Buddha National Park was set up by the Government of Nepal in 1989, which doubled up as an outdoor nursery education centre. The village was then restored to its former glory, and wildlife conservation efforts have increased. In 2016, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal signed the conservation effort with the Lumbini Development Trust. The collaboration began with an initial goal of planting one million trees under the Green Lumbini initiative. Over the years, WWF Nepal has expanded its scope of work and partnerships to conserve and protect Sarus Cranes and their habitats.

The Lumbini Development Trust, International Crane Foundation, Lumbini Cultural Municipality and local community partners, in WWF’s effort, are working to conserve Sarus Cranes and promote Kala Namak rice with tree planting, building scissors to store rainwater and forming small clubs to generate awareness on crane conservation.

There is a sense of urgency to this work because Lumbini’s wetlands are increasingly threatened by pollutants, land encroachment, proliferation of industries, collection of invasive vegetation and pesticide and fertilizer use.

Mechanical harvest of rice and wheat also deplete Sarus Cranes and other birds from their food source. New highways, transmission lines and mobile towers have also endangered the remaining Sarus Cranes and other large birds.

Urban expansion, unmanaged effluent, sewage and garbage are polluting water sources, and affecting biodiversity in the wetlands. Globally, freshwater biodiversity decline is happening at an alarming rate of 64% average since 1970.

However, there is still hope to reverse this loss, protect Lumbini’s wetlands and prevent the birds from becoming extinct. The Nepal Government needs to make a stronger commitment to protect, restore and manage existing wetlands. It would be crucial to promote sustainable community stewardship towards conservation of wetlands and Sarus Cranes, alongside protecting crucial farming, including use of harmful pesticides and mobilising youth in the conservation efforts.

As we embrace the themes of World Wetland Day 2021, we must pledge to protect and value water and wetlands. Sarus Cranes represent a lifetime of perseverance, and these large, elegant, birds are our messengers for how we all need to work together to save them.

Rajendra Sowal, the Chairperson of Lumbini Development Trust, at WWF Nepal.

Decline in wintering waterfowl

On World Wetland Day, a look at the importance of Nepal’s lakes and rivers for migratory birds. Experts have pointed out that a reduction in the number of migratory waterfowl in Nepal’s lakes and rivers is a worrying trend.

A recent study by the Centre for Environmental Science and Conservation at Kathmandu University concludes that between 2015 and 2018, the number of migratory birds recorded in Nepal fell from 839,500 to 700,000. The study attributes the decline to climate change, pollution and habitat loss.

Birders at Chitwan, Karnali River and Bardia Lake also counted fewer ducks, geese and other waterfowl species, compared to previous years—raising serious concern about the health of Nepal’s wetlands and affecting the safety of the birds on our natural heritage.

Waterfowl are important for a variety of reasons. They are indicator species, providing insight into the health of an ecosystem and the environment. As they move through different habitats, they act as ‘mixers’ of species and help in the dispersal of seeds. They also serve as a food source for other species, including larger birds and mammals.

The good news is that the number of waterfowl recorded has started to increase in recent years, with over 50,000 waterfowl observed in Nepal’s wetlands during the winter months. However, the decline in numbers has raised concerns among conservationists and birdwatchers.

Experts say the decline is due to a combination of factors, including climate change, pollution, habitat loss, and hunting. They suggest that conservation efforts need to be strengthened to protect these vital ecosystems and their wildlife.

Ram Prasad Bodhak, the Bird Conservation Nepal, said, “Waterfowl are an indicator species, they show us the condition of the habitat.”

In January, bird counters, over 500 volunteers, fanned out across 60 wetland spots across Nepal over a two-week period. They did not count birds and their species, but more critically information about hunting and habitat destruction.

The good news this year were sightings of new species, such as the Mandarin duck in the Parbat and Yellow-billed Duck in the Kosi. However, the volume of birds and their species, has not seen a significant increase.

The bad news is that the number of birds has continued to decline, with the number of waterfowl recorded in Nepal’s wetlands falling from 839,500 to 700,000 over the past few years. This has raised concerns about the health of Nepal’s wetlands and affecting the safety of the birds on our natural heritage.
rare cranes

Brown-headed Gull at Taudaha

Kamal Maden

It was one of those brilliant clear autumn mornings at Taudaha on the southern outskirts of Kathmandu. This historical pond is regarded as the last remnant of the lake that once covered Kathmandu Valley, where the serpents are still supposed to live. We do not know about serpents, but Taudaha is an important stopover for migratory waterbirds en route from as far away as Siberia to the plains of the Subcontinent.

While bird-watching at Taudaha in late November, I saw a gull feeding near flocks of other waterfowl that had just flown in from the north. I could not make out through my binoculars whether it was the Black-headed or Brown-headed Gull. But this was an exciting sighting, and I clicked several shots.

About a dozen migratory gull species are sighted in Taudaha every winter, including the Common Gull, Common Moorhen, Little Cormorant, Oriental Waterthrush. In winter, the Brown-headed Gull breeds in the high prairies of central Asia from Tajikistan to Inner Mongolia. In winter, it migrates south, crossing the Himalaya along the river valley to winter in the lakes of the Subcontinent. According to one estimate, the bird travels 1,200 km in two weeks.

Brown-headed Gulls are a rare bird in the Kathmandu Valley, with just two records of sightings in November 2004 and October 2005. The Brown-headed and Black-headed Gulls are similar in appearance, and are easy to confuse. The Brown-headed Gull is slightly bigger, but on close observation the shape of its head, the colour of its primary eye are different.

The Brown-headed Gull has a steep forehead, whereas the Black-headed gull has a smaller and rather rounded head. This feature is hard to view in flight, but easier to notice when they are floating. Brown-headed gull has strikingly dark outer primaries or longer flight feathers. Ninth and tenth primaries are completely black with spots near the tip, which is often indicative that it is young or their bird's first winter. The gull seen in Taudaha was probably a Brown-headed Gull because of its dark eye. 

International: “With this census we aim to increase public awareness about bird conservation by engaging local communities.”

Nepal’s great ecological diversity, a terrain that ranges from 70m above sea level to 8,848m with a horizontal distance of less than 104km means that it has more than 822 bird species, more than 159 of them in summer, when migration is relatively shorter in distance. Every winter, birds from as far as Siberia, Europe, South Africa, Central Asia and East Asia travel to Nepal in search of favourable weather and habitat.

They spend most of their time in Lake Taudaha, Bishnumati Lake in Chhautara, Jagat, Chhom, Ghasar, Lake in Kallari, Bhadgaon, Lake area and Kos, Candket, Kusopani and their tributaries.

Rare sighting of a migratory gull on the outskirts of Kathmandu
**Sips of Poetry**
Celebrate the month of love with poems alongside a bite of curated poetry performances by the poetry club Kantanidhra. This edition of journey will have poems on love and other themes both in Nepali and English. Visit the website.
13 February, 7pm

**Events**

**Kanta Sambat**
Wind up at the Saturday afternoon with a live artist, accompanied by delicious teas and desserts prepared by Curio’s chef. Through her, you’ll get a behind-the-scenes look at a blend of traditional, Himalayan and various Western musical influences to create a groovy night. 15 February, 6pm-10pm, Curio, North Side, Dining

**Beyond Activism**
The UI Embassy is hosting a virtual panel event, “Beyond Activism: Mental Health in Nepal.” Panelists include: Dr. Gita Bhandari, Dr. Bishnu Prasad Poudel, and Dr. Bijaya Bhusan Rana. Join the conversation about how we can support mental health in Nepal. 17 February, 7pm

**Kurzgesagt**
Kurzgesagt - a纳什州创作了一部教育意义的短片，旨在提高公众对科学、技术、政治、哲学和心理学主题的认识。它不仅提供信息，还教育观众思考科学教育材料。前往Kurzgesagt YouTube频道。

**Online Archives**

**Photo Museum Nepal**
Take a look at archived photographs from throughout Nepal’s history and learn the stories behind the photographs.

**Dining**

**Railtane**
Celebrating and promoting the endangered local ruminants to produce ethnic cuisine of Nepal. Railtane is back with a curated menu. Live your way through Nepal.

**Deli Ajuk**
Deli Ajuk has four locations where it serves Nepali and international delicacies, choose what fits the mood and season. 016-611-7803

**Air Quality Index**

**Khalo S.A.**
A Cycle of Life

**Our Pick**

Almost a year since the American action drama Mulan was released, Disney is set to release a live-action sequel in Nepal’s UK Cinemas. Who will be your favorite character? The, Mulan, Mushu, or Li Shang, which has been beautifully re-created in this live-action version? Mulan’s story, set in ancient China, has been loved by millions worldwide, and now, Disney has brought it to Nepal with a beautiful retelling of the story. Mulan will be screening at the Himalaya Cinemas in Kathmandu; it will open on 18 February, 2022.
Be water
Two flash stories about how water, with its quality to cleanse is a draw

My mother is grieving. She has lost a chunk of her childhood. Love is sometimes unnamed. But this loss, she likes to talk about. They’re gone, she tells me.

SUBURBAN TALES
Pratibha Tuladhar

The water hyacinth and lotuses. There were pink and white lilies and lavender water hyacinths. We could sit by the side of the pond and wait for the fish to flip. Sometimes, one floundered for a bit on the surface before finding the way back below the water’s surface. Sometimes, we would see snakes and frogs and confuse them for fish. We even confused tadpoles for fish, she says.

She likes to talk, my Mother. She goes on:

There weren’t just ponds. There were springs, that had been fenced (as by walls of red bricks) turning them into pools that served as community wells. There were those of them at a distance of six minutes’ walk from the house. Father had built one of those for the community. There were two others built by others, who also wanted to be of service to the community.

These were places of doing—there were always women washing clothes. The dirty water was led away by a gutter to meet the canal that irrigated the fields that spanned as far as the eyes could see. The fields always stayed irrigated, the pond always had plenty of water. On days when no one washed clothes there, the pond would flow out, clear, clean water that glittered in the sun. Sometimes, its reflection made you squint.

There were fish, and sometimes snakes. Sometimes, a toad. When the water overflowed, the fish would often show up at the brink, stare in fright at the human encounter, pop and dive back quickly into its depth. Children wanted to catch them. They would catch some, thrust them in a bottle and take them home, but would bring them back eventually because the Hortikars’ jars didn’t make good aquariums.

There was something soft about the way the water lapped against the walls when women leaned down to draw water out with dippers.

Children helped their mothers with smaller utensils. Fathers helped carry buckets full of water home—walking sideways as the weight of the water dragged them down. Some women would bring their stiffs and fill them always to the brink. But there was never a wait. There was always plenty for everyone.

The springs were located far from each other, the one at the farthest end, called गोदा, was bigger than the other two and always overflowing. Young men would dip in the pool. Women only went to that one if the men were not around.

Sometimes, a boy pinning for a sight of his beloved would wait by the springs, hoping to catch a moment of privacy with her—to look into her eye directly without having to say anything. Sometimes, a girl sat on the road, prostrate, surrenders herself to the sun, in deep contemplations about a life that was momentarily stolen to be free of surveillance. The गोदा were so much.

But people in the neighbourhood soon started planting pipes and used machines to pump the water out to fill private tanks. Then houses started going up in the vicinity. Wells were being dug for each household. The water level started to recede so people had to tie their buckets in a rope to draw out water.

There was never enough water. And their platforms where women formerly sat, washing clothes, became scattered with colourful plastic bags, discarded toothbrushes, soap wrappers, and whatnot.

They are like empty temple cows, says my Mother. I hear they no longer hold water. And with that, a chapter of my childhood has also closed.

***

We decided to abandon the play halfway. It was excruciatingly long drawn and boring. Through much of it, we had sat sighing, in longing for something else. It was during the interval that we ran into one another in the Ladies’ How’re you liking it? She asked.

Me: Well. Want to take a walk?

Where?
Kamal Pokhari?
Ummm. Okay.
She was carrying a bouquet of flowers in her arms. For the cast, perhaps. She brought it along when we left the theatre. We bought a big bag of fixed and crossed the road to arrive at the side of the pond. Kamal Pokhari, the one dedicated to the lilies. We found a little gate that led us into the area, marked off by walls to enclose the pond. There were walkways around it. Some people were walking, too. Brick walking. And a couple on a date, walking slowly. Their fingers twirled in one another.

The pond had been cordoned off by a herded wire fence, but we managed to find a niche and stepped in and sat by the edge of the water. We were so close to the water hyacinths. Closer to the center were lilies blooms—still, as Kathmandu moved around it a thousand sounds. All. This is pretty. I’ve never done this before.

That’s the whole point, isn’t it?
Then she extended her arms and dropped the bouquet in my arms gently, like it was a baby.

Yesterday was your birthday. It was.

We smiled at each other and nibbled on the fringe. She asked me at some point about my heart. I told her I was healing. Only, there can’t be healing for some wounds. True. True.

But we can make it lighter. Through laughter, music.

And these, at Kamal Pokhari, in twilight, two wrinkled girls, introverted to the extent of withdrawing from the world, sat to alight on a long time, seeing potatoes and looking at flowers, until the guard came and told us we had been more minutes.

Even moments were timed.
The full picture on phone cameras

Even before ultra-high-resolution cameras make it to Nepal, there are already phones with impressive performance.

There was a time when smartphone shoppers looked for phones packed with every feature they could possibly need. Everybody wanted a phone that is a radio, torch, camera, internet portal, gaming console, alarm clock, calculator, map, calendar, personal assistant, notebook and more—all rolled into one block of various metals, wrapped in plastic (or glass).

Those days, phone users were just looking for a great camera to capture moments to share. Yes, battery life and physical features were still important when making a purchase, but with most premium phones averaging at a battery capacity of 3000-5000mAh, the power bank has become a matter of contention.

Regarding the physical appearance, the size of phone covers and pop sockets are still prevailing, making it easy for people to regularly rotate the way their phones look. It's no surprise that choosing a smartphone is essentially choosing a romantic partner—it helps to have good looks, of course, but quality and performance are what will determine whether the relationship is a lasting one.

So, the camera is queen. The key point to keep in mind is whether the smartphone you have your heart set on has the camera quality you want or need.

In most cameras, the image sensor plays an important role. The bigger the pixel size, the better the camera performance. For example, a 48 MP camera with a 1/2-inch sized sensor is considered pretty good. You want your pixels to be large, as a larger pixel can capture more light than a smaller pixel.

The ability to capture more light means a better performance when you’re taking pictures with friends at a dimly lit bar, when light is at a premium. A lot of phone manufacturers tie up with well-known brands to bump up their camera setup, which allows Nokia to offer a Carl Zeiss lens and Hassel to partner with Leica. However, bigger, better sensors and a larger pixel size is not always possible. Enter a technique called pixel binning, a powerful process that sees data from four pixels combined into one.

So, a camera sensor with tiny 0.9 micron pixels will produce results equivalent to 1.8 micron pixels when taking a pixel-binned shot. Smartphone manufacturers use this to keep customers happy with camera quality, especially in the budget phone segment. Ultra-high resolution cameras may take time to come to the Nepal mobile market, but the current crop of 40MP and 64MP sensors are already showing impressive results when using pixel binning. With ever-improving capabilities like night mode, better zoom, and AI features, there is plenty of potential for the smartphone photos of the future.

The tiny hole that you can see inside your phone camera lens concerns the opening of the lens, or the aperture. Let's pretend there are doors sliding in front of your camera lens; you may call these doors Aperture. How much these doors open and close, and how much light they let in, determines the quality of pictures.

The lower the number next to the "F" (signifying Focal Length), the brighter and more visible your photo will be. Unlike DSLR cameras, most smartphones come with a fixed aperture, but luckily, nowadays the "F" mode on your phone camera offers customization of the aperture.

Google Pixel is a great example of a phone that excels with a single lens, but multi-lens is an added bonus. Instead of counting the visible camera lenses on your phone (triple cam, anyone!), you are better off judging the phone’s image processing skills.

This is a software that processes the data that is captured by the camera. Unlike a sensor or a lens, which cannot be changed or replaced after you get your phone, image processing is an AI system based algorithm that can actually be altered or improved post purchase.

To test the power of image processing, try installing G Cam (the Google Camera app) on your Android phone and check out the different it makes to your picture quality.

Basic features to look out for: HDR Plus: High Dynamic Range mode allows the camera to click over-exposed, under-exposed and normal images it combines to produce a well-balanced high-definition photograph with great clarity, excellent detailing and accurate colouring.

Portrait Mode: This premium feature blurs the background, and keeps the object in the foreground sharp and clear. Portrait Mode plays with the depth of field to give a unique, dreamy effect that will garner heavy Likes.

Optical Zoom vs. Digital Zoom: Optical Zoom uses the actual lens of the camera to zoom into a frame before clicking. Digital Zoom uses digital software to zoom into the frame and crop it to produce the zoom effect, but this compromises the quality of image.

EIS and OIS: Often, photographers and video content creators use EIS (Electronic Image Stabilisation) to help with making videos smoother by cropping some of the bad frames automatically. OIS (Optical Image Stabilisation) is hardware-related and not a digital shortcut to perfection. This means that phones that offer camera setups with OIS support tend to cost more, usually because higher-end flagships feature it.

Panorama Mode: Labelled "Pano" on many phones, this feature was once a novelty, but now an expected 'essential' that allows the phone to capture more of a scene by combining images to create a horizontally wide panoramic photo. This is a great addition for people in Nepal who regularly capture mountain views or trips.

Time Lapse: A filmmaker’s favourite feature lets you take a sequence of 15 frames per second intervals to record changes that take place slowly over time. When the frames are shown at normal speed, the action seems much faster, as if you have seen the sunset set but by really quick flowers blooming in the movie.
Kathmandu remembers Aung San Suu Kyi

Well-wishers in Nepal hope she will be freed soon, and Burma will return to normal

Burma is in the news again with this week’s military coup, and Nepalis who had known Aung San Suu Kyi during visits to Kathmandu are concerned about her safety and of other democracy leaders.

Aung San Suu Kyi first came to Nepal when her mother Khin Kyi was Burma’s ambassador to Nepal and India. In a later visit in 1979 with her husband Min Aung and her infant son Alexander, she stayed at the Dharma Kirti Vihara in Kathmandu for five months.

Every time she visited Nepal after that she went to the monastery near Annapurna which is headed by Gurumtha Dhammavati. The revered Buddhist nun remembers Aung San Suu Kyi as a patient and quiet person.

“Politics is full of ups and downs, I believe she will soon be released,” says Dhammavati, who taught the Burmese leader about Buddhism.

Nita Tuladhar at the Dharma Kirti Vihara says Aung San Suu Kyi had a special connection with the monastery and Kathmandu. “She had said during one of our conversations that she turns to the teachings of Gurumtha Dhammavati when she is going through difficult times. She is going through a difficult time now.”

Aung San Suu Kyi went to Lady Shri Ram College in New Delhi and lived in Thrissur and Kathmandu, writing two books about Bhutan and Nepal. Her husband was a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism in the Himalayas.

“I always wanted to learn English and when I heard there was an English teacher at the vihara, I joined the class. It was only many years later, when I saw her on TV that I realized she was an important political figure. We called her Ma Suu Kyi,” recalls Chhimi Dhamgat, who was tutored by Suu Kyi when he was five.

There were 20 pupils in the English class, and one of them was Tshokchhen Tuladhar, who remembers being told that a Burmese teacher had joined the vihara, but did not know who she was.

Aung San Suu Kyi and President Myint Swe were arrested on 1 February by the army in a night-time sweep in Yangon along with other ministers and members of parliament. There is heavy military presence in the capital Naypyidaw and Yangon, and media control has been tightened.

Aung San Suu Kyi visited the vihara again in 2016 when she attended the controversial “Asia-Pacifc Summit” in Kathmandu. In 2016 organised by the Korean Unification Church of South Korea.

During the visit there was a special prayer at the vihara, where she enquired about her students. “We stood up from our seats so that she could see us from the stage, but because it was a big event, we did not get to speak to her,” Tuladhar recalls.

Even since news came of the military coup in Burma and Suu Kyi’s arrest this week, Gurumtha Dhammavati has been recalling her days at the vihara.

“The eldest son Alexander was only three months old at the time,” remembers Dhammavati. “Her husband headed to the mountains to conduct a study on gomba there, and Suu Kyi stayed at the vihara with her son.”

Born in Dhaka, Michael Aris was a historian and wrote books on Buddhist traditions in the Himalayas. He died in Oxford in 1999, while Suu Kyi was still under house arrest in Yangon.

Dhammavati herself visited Aung San Suu Kyi during her trip to Burma with other Buddhist nun from Nepal in 1992. “She was under house arrest at the time and would spend her time in meditation and reading. We had lunch at her house, and there was a tight military presence,” she says.

Aung San Suu Kyi was released in 2010, and her National League for Democracy swept the election five years later. She was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle for democracy.

But the international respect she had was soon eclipsed by her refusal to speak out against the persecution of the Rohingya. Some 700,000 people from this ethnic group in western Burma have fled to Bangladesh since 2017, with a few dozen even finding their way to refugee camps in Kathmandu.

Burma’s military junta has come under worldwide criticism in the wake of the coup, with only Beijing supporting it at the United Nations this week. The Nepalese government has also called for the release of President Myint Swe and Suu Kyi.

“This seems more of a time of political turmoil the world over,” says her student Tshomchola Tuladhar. “Things are not any different in Nepal after Prime Minister Oli dissolved the House.”

At the Dharma Kirti Vihara, Aung San Suu Kyi’s Nepali students and teacher are praying for her early release, and for things to return to normal in Burma.

Gurumtha Dhammavati: “What makes me sad is that these events keep repeating themselves in countries like ours.”
Nepal’s air ambulance

Helicopter emergency service is a lifeline for women in remote areas with birthing complications

The rotor of the Nepal Army Bell 407 helicopter is turning even before the cabin door is closed. The crew checks through pre-flight checks, and it is ready to take off for the 20-minute trip to an isolated village high in the mountains of Kavre. There is no moment to lose. Skimming the forested ridges on the eastern edge of Kathmandu Valley, the helicopter gains altitude as it approaches the village nestled in the Mahabharat Range. The pilots consult a map to get the exact location right.

The olive-green helicopter lands in a cloud of dust on a fellow terrace. The patient is a 28-year-old Lekamaya Dakshani, who has given birth that morning at the village health post. She is still bleeding profusely, and needed to get to hospital in Kathmandu as soon as possible.

Earlier, Lekamaya’s husband and family had called the hotline to the President’s Program for Women’s Empowerment under the Ministry for Women, Children and the Elderly in Kathmandu.

Section Chief Anja Dhungana had taken the call and asked about the mother’s condition, instructed the family to immediately get an ambulance from the health post, and noted the location of the landing spot.

Dhungana then called the Nepal Army Air Wing, and said, “We have an urgent maternity rescue in Kavre.” Another call to the CDO in Dhulikhel to coordinate the rescue, and a last call to the relatives of the patient to assure them that a rescue chopper was on its way.

Every day, at least three mothers die while giving birth all over Nepal. Despite remarkable achievements in reducing its maternal mortality rate (MMR) from 413 per 100,000 births thirty years ago to less than 240 today, Nepal still has a long way to go to meet the United Nation MDG target of 70 by 2030.

In fact Nepal’s first Covid-19 fatality was a woman who died on 16 May, ten days after solely delivering a baby at the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu. She was sent home to her village in Sindupalchok, with symptoms of complications but delay in getting her to hospital because the family could not afford an ambulance during the pandemic cost her life.

The President’s Program for Women’s Empowerment is an initiative to save the lives of mothers at childbirth. It was launched in 2018, and has saved 1366 mothers who may not have survived if they did not get urgent hospital treatment.

Patients in 19 remote districts and parts of 24 districts that do not have roads can apply for rescue. Areas with adequate maternity facilities or road connectivity are not eligible. The program has an annual budget of Rs 60 million.

Lekamaya is getting intravenous fluid as she is loaded into the helicopter which takes off immediately for Kavre. The helicopter’s nurses tend to her needs in transit. She arrives at the hospital safely.

The main factors in the reduction of MMR are: rising female literacy, fewer child marriages, the contribution of female community health volunteers, and increase in deliveries in health facilities after the recent spread of the road network. However, the graph is flattening out because of the lack of health care in remote areas. There has also been a spike in MMR during the pandemic in 2020.
saves mothers

Lokmaya is semi-conscious, and because the nurse at the health post had warned against it, her mother keeps stroking her, and playing a favourite song on a mobile phone near her ear. The helicopter lands at Kathmandu airport, and Lokmaya is transferred to an ambulance which rushes her to the Maternity Hospital with sirens blaring. The hospital itself was built in memory of the mother of King Birbhum who died at childbirth at age 24 because of loss of blood.

Lokmaya is treated, and two days later her condition had improved enough for her to sit up and breastfeeding the baby. Not all the emergency airlifts have a happy ending. Sometimes the relatives wait too long, at others the helicopter is not available, or is delayed by weather. Recently, a mother who had just given birth at a private hospital in Biratnagar had post-partum haemorrhage. The relatives could not afford the hospital’s fees, and drove her home on a 12-hour journey to Sukhrawadha. They applied for an air ambulance, but it was too late for the mother.

"Complications usually arise when it is a teenage pregnancy, a home delivery, or a delivery case that needs a cesarean; that is not available in the village," says Sangita Mishra, Director of the Maternity Hospital.

The program has the following criteria for eligibility for free emergency airlift: prolonged labour, if the baby is born and not viable, complications of pregnancy, post-partum haemorrhage, or those who cannot be treated at local facilities. Pushpakhala Rai of Sukhrawadha had been in labour for five days, and was in intense pain. Her husband applied for an emergency airlifter and she was flown to Kathmandu where the Maternity Hospital performed an emergency cesarean, saving both mother and baby.

"We mothers risk our lives giving birth," says Pushpakhala, "especially when there are health complications." Two days after Lokmaya Darlami was flown to Kathmandu, we go back to check up on her at the Maternity Hospital. She had received two units of blood transfusion, and was in stable condition. She smiles and says, "I thought I would die." 

Residents’ Program by Women’s Right Hub: Centre for Reproductive Health

1871-98708

Tapai Ko Sapnalaai Sakar Parn...

Aakarshik Vyaj Dharma Vishesh Karjana Yojana


✓ Aavas Karjana
✓ Shreejik Karjana
✓ Aas Aap Ek Karjana
✓ Samvadik Satho Karjana
✓ Vishesh Vishesh Karjana
✓ Sanna Tathaa ManUSHa Seshvishesh Khub Nisamana Karjana
✓ Aavas Karjana, Sama Vrat Karjana, Sushita Karjana Or Sleshma Karjana UPARANT 9.49% DHEEJ VAHIDH AADHAR BHUTA ADHARBHUTAM ROPLIYA Disha Madaan Disha 10 5

Vishesh Vishesh

✓ Sushita Swayam Praveena
✓ Aavas, Samaa Bhavnya Praveena
✓ Samaa Vrat Karjana Tadka DHEEJ VAHIDH
✓ Upavartha Vrat Karjana SESHVISHESH SESHVISHESH PRALIVAM STHA

Aadhar Pranayam Andhik Bojjan Lajyana

Himalayan Bank Bheem Bank Ltd.

Himalayan Bank Bheem Bank Ltd.

Himalayan Bank Bheem Bank Ltd.
Nothing doing

Thank to the Nepal-Depal faction of the Nepal Communist Party, those of us nostalgic about this country’s glorious past could on Thursday once more relive some of our fondest memories of a wholesome, old-fashioned band.

Once again, there was the familiar smell of a tye bume at the Thapathali intersection, the uplifting sight of heroic agitators creating a vegetable vendor’s bicycle in order to defend the Constitution, and a taxi undergoing spontaneous combustion in Gereha. It’s not realised how much we missed the good old days, but here we are: back in the roaring nineties once again.

Those who say Nepal has been pushed back a decade are wrong: we are exactly where we were 20 years ago. Just as Sir Isaac Newton so eloquently put it in his Third Law of Thermodynamics: ‘A nation at rest will continue to remain at rest even if the ruling party has a two-thirds majority.’

A political lockdown is proof that we live in a vibrant democracy, where every citizen has the right to hold and express a dissenting point of view, and is free to make a complete aman of himself or herself. We can all rejoice that an important part of our traditional heritage that was about to be relegated to the dustbin of history has been carefully revived for posterity.

Just as we were beginning to feel that Nepal’s lock-tunts and gun-tunts were in danger and our freedoms were in serious jeopardy, came reassuring proof that it is alive and kicking still.

We are still a dynasty between two bulldozers, as Unnati Firewa once proclaimed. When he was still preparing for trench warfare with India. The only difference is that the geologist stick is now between his two hind cheeks.

Since both Comrade Awesome and Comrade Ohy are in complete agreement about wanting to destroy the country, why don’t they do it together? Why fight about it? It would save time, and much of their ill-gotten wealth, if they pooled their resources to make things worse by organizing future shutdowns jointly.

Thank to the Supreme Leader and Dear Leader, we are marching resolutely to restore our hard-won democracy. Being a multi-coloured, sovereign nation, Nepal will not tolerate foreigner trying to destabilise us. We are perfectly capable of wrecking this country all by ourselves.

Forcing the country to stop for a day or a few weeks is such a masterstroke. Thursday was a relief because we could all stay home comforted by the knowledge that a country that was already at a standstill was brought to a complete halt.

Here are some of the other achievements of the band:

- With offices closed, bribes were not transacted and corruption was controlled to a certain extent.
- There was 24-hour monsulism on kickbacks.
- Slow-down in fast-track projects reduced their negative environmental impacts.
- Because meetings and rallies were put off and public transport was off the roads, thousands of Nepalis who would otherwise have been infected with coronavirus were not.
- Nepal’s petroleum import bill came down a notch, reducing our per capita carbon footprint to the targets set by our Nationaliy Determined Contributions.
- Air pollution in Kathmandu on Tuesday came down to 30 Enoch s Breaths Without Dying Level.

KOYINABATH SURUKSITAM RAR/I TIN UPAYAYAM

KOYINABATH AUKU PALTI BACHA/R INUKA PALTI BACHA

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