Now that elections look more probable after the rains end, the parties are getting serious. Anyway you look at it, the frontline of the November polls will be the Tarai. While the NC and UML have largely written themselves off the plains vote, the Maoists and Madhesis are targeting the Tarai. Which also brings them into a collision course as they vie for the same votes. Maoist leaders may not be able to stand each other, but they also know that divided they fall.

Most Nepalis, however, have more pressing matters and couldn’t care less about elections. Party leaders have done their best in the past to convince voters of their incompetence. The polarisation is now so intense that the chances of a free, fair, and violence free polls are iffy. Some leaders are already complaining about the Election Commission’s code of conduct that bans helicopters and excessive expenses during campaigning.

**BY THE WAY**

by ANURAG ACHARYA

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**WIDER ROADS WON’T SOLVE KATHMANDU’S TRAFFIC WOES**

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The newly widened and paved street in Gyaneswor looks clear on a weekend, but is gridlocked at rush hour.
These are not ‘natural’ disasters but man-made calamities, is what have we done to mitigate loss of life and damage? let’s not blame nature, the real disaster is the failure of governance that leads to lack of preparedness. The Himalaya is a fragile and geologically young range, prone to erosion and landslides in what is also the most densely populated mountain region in the world. The combination of topography and climate make the Himalaya vulnerable to disasters. Hazard mapping pinpoints where settlements can be expected. Our forefathers knew it was dangerous to live along floodplains and build homesteads on higher ground. Cloudbursts have always been a feature of the Asian summer monsoon, so settlements and infrastructure have to take these risks into account and heed nature’s repeated warnings. The tragedy that struck Uttarakhand was worse because it coincided with the pilgrimage season to the holy Hindu sites when thousands of Nepalis flock to northern Indian states either as pilgrims or porters. As it turned out, more Nepalis were killed in India than in Nepal. There have been heroic rescues and miraculous tales of survival from India. Even the Indian state, with all the heavy-lift helicopters and a relatively better equipped disaster response setup at its disposal, found it difficult to cope with the sheer scale of the disaster. One shudders to think what would have happened if the Nepali side been hit harder. Floods and landslides during the monsoon should not surprise anyone, what is surprising is our utter lack of preparedness, the ad hoc nature of the response, and the disaster tourism of our ‘cockpit neta’. As pressure on land forces people to settle on floodplains, and climate change increases the intensity of extreme weather events, our response should be better early warning systems, and preparedness for rescue and relief. Let’s not blame nature, the real disaster here is the failure of governance and the lack of political will not just to be prepared but to even provide the relief that is needed when disaster strikes.

I t is the same old story every monsoon season, only this year it started earlier than usual. Massive cloudbursts over western Nepal and the neighbouring Indian state of Uttarakhand in mid-June unleashed the total average monthly rainfall in a short space of 24 hours. Every year, the downstream Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh blame Nepal for ‘releasing’ water. This time, it was Nepal that accused India of letting out water from the Dh病理ign Dam on a tributary of the Mahakali River that forms Nepal’s western border with India. Someone forgot that the Dh病理ign Dam is a run-of-the-river scheme with daily pondage so it doesn’t store much. It is the same blame game every rainy season: governments are blamed for lack of planning and timely response, the Indians are blamed for building embankments, Biharis blame Nepal for letting water out from non-existent dams, climate change is blamed for our lack of preparations, and everyone blames God for unleashing a ‘natural disaster’. The rainfall this year was heavy, but it was hardly unprecedented. Northern India has historically suffered major floods, including the dam bursts and heavy rainfall in 1944 by a landslide, and the bursting of the impounded lake which unleashed a wall of water that devastated the valleys below all the way down to Haridwar. The district capital of Darchula, Khalanga, itself is located on an elevated bank that is the relic of catastrophic floods on the Mahakali in historic times. In the time of earthquakes, there is no point blaming God. Floods and earthquakes are a given in Nepal, the question is what have we done to mitigate loss of life and damage? These are not ‘natural’ disasters but man-made calamities because population pressure, greed, and corruption lead people to flood building codes and zoning laws. The Himalaya is a fragile and geologically young range, prone to erosion and landslides in what is also the most densely populated mountain region in the world. The combination of topography and climate make the Himalaya vulnerable to disasters.
Battle for the ballots

Now that November polls look probable its back to the good, bad, and ugly in politics

When the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in May last year, we had warned that holding another CA elections would be a challenge not just constitutionally but also politically. Nepal’s transition and statute drafting process had come to a grinding halt on 28 May after the assembly was polarised over a few points of disagreement. One year later, we are no closer to resolving those contentious issues on state structure, identity-based federalism, and form of government. If anything, the parties have hardened their positions.

In 2008, the parties and their leaders had election manifestos that reflected aspirations of those they claimed to represent. The leaders went from door to door, convincing the people about their political programs. This time they will not do that. The electorate itself is polarised already on political allegiance. Even the media and civil society are visibly divided and deep down the leaders know which side of history they will be on when the people give their verdict.

That is one reason why chances of a free, fair, and violence free polls are iffy. With political parties and their probable candidates already aware of the arithmetic, they seem determined to use good, bad, and ugliest of means to turn the results in their favour. And it will be the Madhes, with more than half their constituencies, which will decide the outcome. The electoral front in the Madhes is beginning to take shape with visible efforts from senior leader Mahanta Thakur. Speculation about the ‘invisible hand’ at work may also be true, but what has actually brought them together is a collective sense of co-existence. The Madhesi leaders may not be able to stand each other, but they also know that divided they fall.

Last time, the Madhesi leaders like Ramchandra Jha and Nand Kumar Datta joining the party proves that the epicentre of the Madhes vs Maoist contest will be played out in the plains. Periodic elections are the lifeline of democracy and an opportunity for the parties to acquire mandates. But if the polls become an excuse for them to use money and muscle to muster that support it loses its essence. The parties have shown their bad faith by openly criticising the Election Commission’s proposal to prevent candidates with criminal records from contesting elections and banning the unrestricted use of helicopters and unlimited campaign expenses.

This is not just an election to parliament, but also to an assembly that is supposed to draft a new constitution. Remember?

BY THE WAY

Anurag Acharya

Remember?

Special to the Times

OPINION 3
**The milky way to prosperity**

After toiling in Saudi Arabia for seven years, Narayan Bhandari (pic, centre) returned home in 2011 determined to earn a living in his own country. He planned to invest the money he had saved up to upgrade his family farm in BharatPokhari, but soon realised it wasn’t viable. He then heard about ‘artificial insemination’ (AI) that farmers in his village claimed helped improve the breed and increase productivity of their livestock. The 33-year-old took the risk and adopted AI in the Sunrise Multi-Agrofarm that he set up.

Currently, 51.5 kg of milk is available per capita per year in Nepal, which is far below the WHO recommended 91.25 kg. The Jersey and Holstein cattle breeds and the Murrah buffaloes are preferred because they are more suitable for the country’s climate. Although artificial insemination was first introduced in Nepal 50 years ago, it was only practiced on five per cent of all cattle and buffaloes.

“My dairy farm is doing well, I will never go back to Saudi Arabia again.”

Narayan Bhandari
Bharat Pokhari, Kaski

The project wouldn’t have been a success, however, without the active participation of local communities. The 250 Community Livestock Breeding Centres across the country which help in the distribution of semen and supervision of inseminators are completely run by farmers.

Satish Lamichhane, 31, from Lekhnath of Kaski started working as an inseminator three years ago after being trained by NLBC. On average, he performs four inseminations a day and is paid up to Rs 500 each time. There are currently 600 inseminators at 500 centres (both government and private) spread across the country and NLBC provides them with necessary equipment free of cost.

Says Bhandari: “My dairy farm is doing well, I will never go back to Saudi Arabia again.”

Afre tests carried out by the Food Technology and Quality Control Department earlier this month found dangerous levels of coliform bacteria in milk supplied by at least six dairies in the Valley, demand saw a sharp decline and dairy farmers found themselves in a tight spot.

What is considered a ‘safe’ level of coliform varies from country to country: zero per cent in the US, five per cent in the EU, and ten per cent in India and Pakistan. Dairy experts agree that demanding milk producers in Nepal to maintain zero per cent bacteria is not feasible and will only harm poor farmers.

**Dairy diary**

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Maintaining hygiene is a long process that should start in the cow shed and be followed all the way to the consumer’s kitchen,” explains Heramba Rajbhandary, owner of the private Nepal Dairy. “We could train farmers but there is shortage of clean water in many parts of the country. We could introduce stricter measures at the chilling plant, but there is 8-10 hours of load shedding. The problems within the dairy industry are indicative of larger problems in the country.” He says Nepal just doesn’t have the technology at the moment where we can replicate the level of hygiene that is practiced in the US. While regular state monitoring and harsher laws will help keep dairy owners in check, there is also a need to improve infrastructure in the villages and towns from where most of Nepal’s milk is collected. Training farmers in hygiene methods in a country where cow urine and dung are still considered holy is also essential. Until then, the onus to remain safe will be on the consumers.

*Trishna Rana*
Timely honour

In recognition of their long-term service, Thai Airways honoured 12 staff members at its office in Kathmandu. The staff who had been working for 15, 25, and 35 years were presented with certificates and rings engraved with the airways’ logo.

Growing routes

Qatar Airways is expanding its Boeing 787 services to Europe with the new state-of-the-art aircraft being deployed on three Scandinavian routes. The Doha-based carrier will launch 787 flights to the Swedish capital Stockholm on 1 August, followed by flights to Copenhagen and Oslo a month later.

Startup help

Bank of Kathmandu on Monday introduced a new loan service called ‘Mahila Udhyamshil Karja’. Female customers of Grihalaxmi savings account and Gramin Mahila savings account who are interested in starting their own businesses are eligible for the loan. Loans up to Rs 300,000 can be granted and is payable within three years of issuance.

Amazing race

Ford in association with Party Nepal Outdoors is organising ‘The Amazing Motor Rally,’ to be held from 13-14 July. The rally which begins in Kathmandu and ends at Pokhara consists of a total of 20 tasks and 10 treasure hunting contests. Participants will also have the opportunity to test drive Ford EcoSport which will be the lead vehicle at the rally.

Sleek ride

Syakar Trading, the authorised distributor for Honda Car in Nepal, launched its much awaited family sedan the Honda Amaze on Monday. Priced at Rs 2,800,000, Honda Amaze will be available in six colours—majestic blue metallic, camelian red pearl, urban titanium metallic, albaster silver metallic, crystal black pearl, and taffeta white.

Baby services

Standard Chartered Bank has opened a day care centre at its head office in Naya Baneshwor to cater to young parents who are employees at the bank. “The private sector needs to step up its act and follow in the footsteps of Standard Chartered,” said Kewal P Bhandari, executive director of Social Security Fund at the inauguration program.

Retail assistance

NMB Bank opened its newest branch and retail hub at Kantipath last week. The new branch aims to provide customers the entire range of banking products and services under one roof according to the press statement. NMB Bank has 21 branches and 25 ATM outlets across the country.

Online makeover

With the objective of providing clients an advanced online platform, Dragon Air upgraded its flagship website on Sunday. The airline hopes these improvements will boost its online and mobile presence.

Helping hands

Radisson Hotel donated TV sets, beds, writing tables, mattresses, and carpets to three organisations at a charity program on Wednesday. The hotel is also collecting funds for the victims of the Darchula flood.

Life’s Good when you get healthy surprises.

The World’s first Door-in-Door Refrigerator with Health Guard & Inverter Linear Compressor

Nepal’s No.1 CONSUMER FRIDGES
A t the Dubai Air Show in November 2009 then Executive Chairman of Nepal Airlines, Sugat Ratna Kansakar, signed a MoU with Airbus to purchase an A330-200 and an A320. This deal received a lot of international media attention and proved that the airline was finally breaking from its past.

After 25 years, Nepal’s national airline was finally buying new jets to service not just the tourism industry but also the three million or so Nepalis who work abroad. As per the agreement, the wide-body 330 and the narrow body 320 were to have been delivered in two years. But after the $750,000 advance was sent to Airbus, Kansakar was jailed for financial irregularities and not following procedures.

Nepal Airlines is finally breaking from its past with its Airbus order, but must reform management by the time the jets arrive in 2015.

Last month, the deal was revived, but the order was changed to two A320s with the Employees’ Provident Fund chipping in $106 million for the purchase. If the original deal had gone through, Nepal Airlines would today already be ferrying Nepali workers back and forth from Malaysia and Qatar and ensuring that their hard-earned money stayed at home. The A320 would have revived Kathmandu’s short haul links to major Indian hubs. Although the Boeing 737-800 would perhaps be a more suitable aircraft than the A320 and maintained fleet compatibility with NAC’s existing Boeings, management seems to have decided to ditch Boeing for Airbus. Now that the decision has been taken, the question will arise what to do with the superannuated 757s, it is not feasible for a small airline like NAC to keep two jet types in its stable.

And even though the wide-body order has been replaced with a narrow body, there is a sense of optimism about the growth of aviation and tourism in Nepal. Other countries with large migrant workforce and tourism potential like the Philippines and Sri Lanka have long-haul wide-body flights to diaspora markets. Nepal Airlines has guaranteed traffic from Kathmandu to many points in India, the Gulf, Southeast Asia, it must not stop at two narrow body planes.

NAC now has two years to upgrade its finance and modernise management. Political interference, corruption, politicised unions, employee favouritism, irregularities on aircraft leases have prevented the airline from realising its full potential. It has got so bad that the airline now makes most of its revenue not from flying, but from ground handling. Although fleet augmentation was necessary, it will not keep the airline afloat if management remains as it is.

When Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation acquired two 727s in the 1970s and added state-of-the-art 757-200s in 1985, it had a good reputation for service and reliability and had a virtual monopoly on international flights. The new A320s, however, will compete directly with international airlines with better service, young fleets, and international networks. NAC needs to reinvigorate, reposition, and perhaps even rebrand itself in the next two years.

The flag carrier is not only an airline company, it is also a symbol of Nepal’s national pride. Even though the existing 757s are old and the in-flight service poor, Nepalis have a sense of pride flying an airline that flies our flag. But let’s admit it, that pride has taken a dent lately. With a reinvigorated management, visionary leadership, political stability, efficiency, discipline, and service quality, there is no reason it can’t fly high again. The success story of Ethiopian Airlines serves as an excellent example.

With a fleet size of more than 80 planes, including the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, Ethiopian is the leading and fastest growing airline of Africa. Nepal’s aviation market is estimated to be worth more than $1.10 billion, this gives Nepal Airlines a huge opportunity as the sole flag carrier.

Hardik Gurung is a graduate student at University of Houston at Clear Lake in the United States.

Note: The former CA Women Caucus had prepared the following appeal, and handed them over to the leadership of Nepal Congress, UCPN-Maoists, CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist, among others. The parties had expressed their commitment to accept our appeal. However, the current government, the political parties and the Constituent Assembly have overlooked our demands in enacting the election laws. We strongly object to this move. We, therefore, once again, urge the government, parties and the Commission to reconsider their decision and amend the laws to incorporate our demands. This statement has been published for making a public appeal in this regard.

Our Previous Appeal to Ensure Election of 33% Women in the Results of CA Polls:

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (CA) that was formed as a result of various political movement and struggle and with the aim of addressing the decades-long aspirations of the people of Nepal to write their constitution by themselves, has been a great setback that has pushed the country into grave political crisis. The state of political vacuum has worsened instability, anarchy, corruption and culture of impunity. Moreover, the incidents of violence against women such as rapists, and burning them alive have increased. As a result, there is a feeling of insecurity among the people, in general, and women, in particular. The country is suffering and our nation and nationalism is becoming weaker day by day. Since holding of election for second CA has emerged as the least-risk option to resolve the prevailing political and other crises, we affirm that a free and fair election of Constituent Assembly should be held at the earliest by bringing all political forces on board.

The dissolved CA had been able to achieve a leap forward in ensuring the proportional representation of various groups and communities that had long suffered exclusion. The attainment of 33 percent representation of women had been exemplary for the world and it was a matter of pride for the whole country. It is the need of the hour that such an achievement should be continued and not let to become a mere historical fact.

However, the provisions in the ordinance proposed to amend the CA Member Election Act, which is currently being considered, can deal a setback to our achievements so far. Any policy must be forward-looking not regressive. If the proposed ordinance is passed as it is, the women representation will slide from 33 to 22 percent. That is not acceptable to us at all. We are ready to launch any kind of movement to ensure that women representation does not decrease.

Therefore, even though the women should have been represented on the proportional basis of their population at the CA, since the parties have agreed to adopt mixed election system, we urge to ensure the following:

A. Closed list of the candidates should be prepared on the basis of priority. The names of the candidates should be listed thus - first the name of woman and then the name of man, in case the fully proportional election system cannot be agreed upon, adequate measures must be taken to ensure that the women representation does not slide below the existing 33 percent

1. There must be fifty percent women candidates under the First Past The Post (FPTP) system,
2. Under Proportional system,
2.1 Of the total proposed number of members, 66 percent should be from women
2.2 Party winning a single seat must send a woman representative
2.3 There is a provision that allows the Election Commission to accept 10 percent plus or minus in the list of winning candidates from various communities fielded by the parties; however, in case of women the EC should accept only 10 percent plus and not accept any lower number
2.4 While rounding up the election result, the upper figure should be accepted in case of women

3. There must be 50 percent women among those nominated as members of CA

Finally, we urge you all to ensure the afore-mentioned provisions and take steps to urge other parties, as well, in this regard.

The Former Women Caucus of CA
The huge discloudbursts over western Nepal and the Indian Himalaya on 17 June was an infusion of Arabian Sea moisture ahead of the advance of the southwest monsoon. It resulted in several cloudbursts that got funneled down to the main tributaries of the Ganges triggering landslides and flash floods. The damage on the Nepal side was not as bad, but there was loss of life as well. The monsoon has now settled into its more normal pattern, expect it to pick up more steam over the weekend. Friday may see a thunderstorm or two over the midhills caused by local convection systems.

KATHMANDU

For the past six months, Maya Sherpa’s daily routine has revolved around training for the 17 hour long Ironman Triathlon taking place on 28 July at Lake Placid, a village in upstate New York. The 32-year-old who is from Solukhumbu and currently works in NYC gets up early in the morning and swims for an hour or two. After work she goes for short runs around the city. Her weekends and vacations are set aside for long distance running and riding.

Contestants will begin this year’s Ironman Triathlon at 7am with a two-loop 3.86 km swim in Mirror Lake. They will then hop on their bikes at the Olympic Speed Skating Oval and complete two loops of 180.25km with stunning views of Adirondack Mountains in the background. For the last leg of the race, participants will come back to the Oval and set off on the 42.2km run which will take them through downtown and around the lake. The final clock in time is midnight.

For an athlete of her strength and skills, it’s hard to believe that Sherpa had little interest in sports when she was in school and only started exercising and becoming more active during her college years at Baruch in New York. “In 2005 when I went to cheer my friend at a marathon, I saw many disabled athletes competing and I was inspired to begin running professionally,” she says. “I realised everything is possible if I put my mind to it. Nothing else matters.”

So far Sherpa has made it across the finish lines of NYC, Miami, Tennessee, and Philadelphia marathons, three half Ironman races (2km swim, 90km biking, 21km running), and numerous 100 mile bike rides. The first Nepali to compete in the Ironman Triathlon, she hopes to raise $5,000 for Empower One, a New York based NGO that supports underprivileged children in Nepal. Empower will use money from the race to provide shelter, healthcare, and rehabilitation for street children in Kathmandu.

“When I see orphans and abandoned children living without education or basic needs, it pains me. I am healthy and fortunate to be doing what I love and if I can raise money at the same time, I don’t mind running an extra mile or swimming an extra lap,” she says. The Ironwoman’s next mission: the demanding three day La Vuelta cycling race in Puerto Rico.

Ngima Pakhrin

To donate:
www.empower1group.org
www.facebook.com/Empower1org

CATCH HER IF YOU CAN:

Maya Sherpa runs the NYC Olympic Triathlon in 2011 (top) and practices for the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii (right).
When artist Milan Rai installed his first set of white butterflies on the remains of a once magnificent tree at Naxal in November last year, little did he know his creations would spread their wings across 18 countries. Today protestors at Taksim Square in Turkey are using Rai’s art to express solidarity just like demonstrators at Baluwatar did a few months ago. In France the butterflies were used to console a mother of a fatally ill two-year-old and in Scotland to send messages to loved ones. Extremely popular both at home and abroad, the white butterflies are headed to New York soon.

The 28-year-old was first struck by the transformative powers of butterflies while he was working on a project called Katha Bagaichako. “One fluttered and settled on my paint brush and I was transported to a more magical place filled with hope and positivity,” explains Rai. “If a tiny creature could so easily transform my state of mind with a flutter of its wings, I wondered what swarms of butterflies descending on dirty, dusty Kathmandu, could do to the city?”

He started out by making butterfly outlines on white paper recycled from printing presses around the Valley, cutting them out, and going around the city planting his creations on trees, lamp posts, old dilapidated houses and walls. Suddenly residents of Kathmandu were treated to the sight of butterflies all around them. When he revisited some of the spots and noticed that the butterflies had vanished, instead of feeling angry, he made more.

Initially, the butterfly man carried out his project on a shoe-string budget from his own pocket buying stacks of A4 paper when he could find none in the press. But soon the money ran out and he was forced to take a break. With no apparent source of funding, Rai had almost given up on his dream when an anonymous donor from California sent him money. “I still have no idea who sent me the money, but I would like to thank the person for helping my butterflies cross borders,” he says.

Rai first broke out into Kathmandu’s art scene with his exhibition in 2007. A series of live painting sessions in collaboration with various artists soon followed. But the young artist’s defining moment came in 2012 when his exhibition called Elphrasis - where he attempted to blur the lines between art, theatre, and fashion - was well received by the art fraternity.

Recently, Rai’s butterflies have found a home on trees along the Ring Road that the government is planning to chop down as a part of its road extension project. “It saddened me that these trees were being cut for the sake of development. So I decided to lend my butterflies as a show of support.” he says. “We are not anti-development. We just want to show the state that there are better ways of doing things.”

www.milanrai.com
Everytime she got a break from school, Srijana Thapa would rush to her grandparents’ photo studio - Photo Concern - and spend hours and hours trying to learn the ABCs of photography. Two years ago Thapa took charge as the managing director and is happy with the way the company, one of the oldest photo studios in Nepal, has grown despite the rising competition. Starting as an intern, she is now the chairperson of Nepal Digital Colour Lab Association and credits her family for her progress. “I never felt inferior to my male colleagues just because I am a woman,” says Thapa.

Breaking into the boardroom

Qualified and skilled Nepali women are forging ahead in the corporate food chain

Breaking the glass ceiling has never been easy for women anywhere. Nepali business women find themselves doubly disadvantaged: by the aggressive male-culture prevalent within corporate circles and the deeply-rooted patriarchal values of society. However, as more and more skilled and qualified women forge their way into senior management positions, they have become role models for younger females. Even then the women say they continue to feel discriminated and have to work much harder than their male counterparts just to prove their worth.

SRIJANA JYOTI
Surrounded by a loving family, Srijana Jyoti led a life of comfort. But she was never quite satisfied being just a dutiful wife and mother. An MBA graduate from KIIT, Jyoti’s managed to keep her passion and business acumen alive even as she spent years taking care of her young children. Egged on by her husband and brother-in-law, she made a comeback to the corporate world three years ago and quickly rose to the rank of marketing director at Jyoti Group. “Working with family has definitely made the transition easier, but outside of my immediate office I have had to face difficulties,” she says.

SUBEKSHYA BASNET
After graduating with degree in business from Germany, Subekshya Basnet got involved in her father Bharat Basnet’s Bhojan Griha restaurant and tourism business. In 2010 she started her own organic business along with her sisters, while still working full time for her father. “Without my father’s guidance I wouldn’t have made it so far,” says Basnet. “Almost every field is male-dominated and women face extreme challenges. But the mantra to success is to keep an open mind and approach problems creatively.”

SEEMA GOLCHHA
As a young marketing executive in India, Seema Golchha never pictured herself as a stay at home mom. But when she got married into a traditional Marwari family, where women working outside their homes is still frowned upon, Golchha quit her job and spent nine years as a housewife. In 2001 she began leading Him Electronics, a Golchha enterprise. “Family members were skeptical, but I didn’t lose heart,” explains Golchha. Today, Him is one of the fastest growing electronics company in Nepal selling international brands like Timex, Samsung, and Bajaj. Says Seema: “If my husband and father-in-law had not encouraged me, it would have been very difficult to make it to where I am today.”

SRIJANA THAPA
Everytime she got a break from school, Srijana Thapa would rush to her grandparents’ photo studio - Photo Concern - and spend hours and hours trying to learn the ABCs of photography. Two years ago Thapa took charge as the managing director and is happy with the way the company, one of the oldest photo studios in Nepal, has grown despite the rising competition. Starting as an intern, she is now the chairperson of Nepal Digital Colour Lab Association and credits her family for her progress. “I never felt inferior to my male colleagues just because I am a woman,” says Thapa.

MEGHA CHAUDHARY
Born into a well-known business family, Megha Chaudhary had very high expectations of herself. Determined to succeed at any cost she started out nine years ago by working as an intern at Norvic Hospital (owned by her family) and demonstrated her skills time and again. She is now actively involved in the expansion of the hospital and improving the Pashupati Biscuit brand. “I feel empowered working at the decision making level. But every time I have to deal with government officials, I realise how being a female entrepreneur is still a big challenge,” she says.
EVENTS

LOVE IN COLOURS, a painting by Chirag Bangdel. Runs till 4 July, Manny’s Eatery and Tapas Bar, Jawalakhel.

Farmers Market, shop for the freshest organic products. Every Saturday, 9am to 12pm, 1905 Restaurant and Bar, Kantipath.

Wordmill, join this writing workshop and take inspiration from three amazing writers. 29 June, 10.30 am to 1.30pm, Wordmill, Thapathali, join this writing workshop and take inspiration from three amazing writers. 29 June, 10.30 am to 1.30pm, Wordmill, Thapathali.

Journey of Writing, calling all reading enthusiasts and aspiring writers interested in short fiction to an interaction program with Samrat Upadhya based on his collection of short stories Arresting God in Kathmandu. Rs 200, 30 June, 3pm onwards, Martin Chautari, Thapathali, Kathmandu, register at himalayanreaders@gmail.com

Uttsav, an exhibition of paintings by Sagar Manandhar. 3 to 30 June, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal.

Unj, She, celebrate the beauty of womanhood, a photo exhibition by Uma Bista. Until 2 July, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark Gallery, Kulimha Tole, Patan, (03)506666, www.image-ark.com

For photographers, a one-on-one consulting sessions for freelance/beginner/working and enthusiasts. Rs 2000, 29 June, 11am onwards, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu, 9851000178

Watch the birds, head out to Gokarna for a day of bird watching. 29 June, 6.30am, Hotel Gokarna, 9851074575.

ROPAIN AND RAFTING, a day of traditional ropain, dahi chiura, games, music, and rafting. Rs 2,500 (for day trip) Rs 3,500 (overnight), 29 June, Sunkoshi Beach Camp, Sukute, Smallupalchok, www.facebook.com/events/2037779543586/

It’s a Slam, seven slam poets battle it out for the title of Slammer. 6 July, 1 to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa.

FUTSAL TOURNAMENT, head out to the futsal arena in Sanepa and participate in the one day futsal tournament. Rs 3,000, 1 July, Sanepa, 54368750798, 5435273.

BAGAICHA, serves Nepali, Indian, Chinese, Continental, and Thai dishes. Jawalakhel

Heritage Kitchen and Bar, quick, friendly service, good Thai food, and the charm of a refurbished old Newari building. Thamel.

Backyard, incredibly reasonable prices and modest and simple food have made this restaurant a favourite among Nepalis and foreigners alike. Jhamsikhel.

ROPAIND AND RAFTING, a day of traditional ropain, dahi chiura, games, music, and rafting. Rs 2,500 (for day trip) Rs 3,500 (overnight), 29 June, Sunkoshi Beach Camp, Sukute, Smallupalchok, www.facebook.com/events/2037779543586/

Heritage Kitchen and Bar, quick, friendly service, good Thai food, and the charm of a refurbished old Newari building. Thamel.

It's a Slam, seven slam poets battle it out for the title of Slammer. 6 July, 1 to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa.

FOODS TAT TOURNAMENT, head out to the futsal arena in Sanepa and participate in the one day futsal tournament. Rs 3,000, 1 July, Sanepa, 54368750798, 5435273.

It’s a Slam, seven slam poets battle it out for the title of Slammer. 6 July, 1 to 4 pm, The Yellow House, Sanepa.

Biggest Yes+ course, build up your confidence, clarity of mind, concentration, time management skills and many more, a workshop for youth. 1 to 6 July, 6 to 9 am or 3 to 6 pm, United World Trade Centre, Tripureswar.

Paintball Battle, show off your skills in the ultimate paintball battle. Rs 500, 13 July, The Target Arena, Sanepa.

NEW DISH, grab filing meals like pork momos, spring rolls, and chop sueys with excellent value for money. Khinchu, Pakistan.

DINING

Utsav, an exhibition of paintings by Sagar Manandhar. 3 to 30 June, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal.

Unj, She, celebrate the beauty of womanhood, a photo exhibition by Uma Bista. Until 2 July, 10am to 5pm, Image Ark Gallery, Kulimha Tole, Patan, (03)506666, www.image-ark.com

For photographers, a one-on-one consulting sessions for freelance/beginner/working and enthusiasts. Rs 2000, 29 June, 11am onwards, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu, 9851000178

Watch the birds, head out to Gokarna for a day of bird watching. 29 June, 6.30am, Hotel Gokarna, 9851074575.

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**Music**

**Connection Live @ Trisara,** enjoy a variety of music from rock to reggae, originals to dancing tunes with Connection. 28 June, 6pm onwards, Trisara, Lajipat, Kathmandu.

Live at Cafe 32, live music and delicious food every Friday. 6pm onwards, Cafe 32, Battipatal, (01)444432

**Himalaya Wellness Centre,** enjoy relaxing yoga, detox and Ayurveda treatments and retreats every day under one roof and get 10 per cent off on all Ayurvedic treatments.

Bhalu Village Resort, a small, cozy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terrace fields dotted with ochre painted houses. Bhalu, Kadihe, (01)449538

Dhulikhel Mountain Resort, announces summer bonanza offer. Make the resort your home for a price you can’t beat. Dhulikhel, (01)490114/494

**Music Jams,** enjoy great live music every Tuesday. Moksh, Thahakothel

Gypsy Jazz, spend your Friday night listening to some jazz with Hari Maharan and Dharmendra Mali. 28 June, 7om, Delices De France, 2nd Floor, Ganesh Man Singh Building, Thamel

**Shrijana Shakti**

A celebration of culture from all corners of Nepal including Dang, Morang, Dhankuta, Sindhupalchok, Rupandehi, and Sumsari. View ethnic paintings and masks made by folk artists and female artists from different districts. The exhibition comes out of the workshop on painting and mask making that was organised to celebrate Women’s Day. Also enjoy mask dances which is an integral part of festivities in Nepal. Get a firsthand experience of Tharu, Newari, Himali, Mithila art and culture in the same venue without the hassle of travelling.

Venue: Nepal Lalitkala Pragya Pratishthan, Nasal, Kathmandu Date: 26 June to 19 July

**Getaways**

Temple Tree Resort and Spa, a peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour, and sauna, it’ll be hard to leave the premises once you enter. Gaushat, Lakeside, (01)45239

Glacier Hotel, a lovely place to stay complete with a waterfront terrace, free wi-fi, children’s playground, and probably the best spa in town. Gaushat, Lakeside, Pokhara, (01)446322

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Rutarkut Club of Lalitpur, AAKA Nepal, Tibah, Ace Institute of Management, Kathmandu Academy have joined hands to collect 1,500+ books and library resources for 2,328 students of three different schools in rural Nepal.

If you don’t have old books, but are interested in contributing, why not buy some. But don’t restrict your donations to books alone. Library resources and creative materials are also welcome.

Give children of Nepal the gift of learning and help make their future better. Collections are underway in Kathmandu.

- Type of books you can donate:
  - New or old
  - Fiction and non-fiction novels, storybooks
  - Magazines
  - Course books (primary level to 12th grade)

To donate: 9841379246/9841342768/9841379246/9849038889

Do you have old books lying around the house eating up space? Course books, novels, magazines that you no longer read? Instead of giving these away to scrap collectors, spread the joy of reading by donating them and bringing books closer to underprivileged children from Kalikot to Karnali.

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Man of Steel

Superman is back, this time in a spectacularly realised world where Superman’s father Jor-El (Russell Crowe) is trying to save what remains of his species by sending his new born son, Kal-El to Earth, with the Codex, a complete genetic history of their race. Krypton is dying and every one on it is doomed, even though Jor-El, the leading scientist there implores the leaders of the council to try and salvage what remains. Enter the unfortunately named General Zod (Michael Shannon), a radical warrior who attempts to stage a coup to save his beloved planet. He fails, but he kills Jor-El in the process and is imprisoned along with his team, just as Kal-El’s shuttle takes off and Krypton collapses into its own core.

On Earth, Kal-El is played by the British actor Henry Cavill, who has radically inflated his physique to try and embody the famed man of steel. Cavill is astonishingly good looking and the athletic physique

rather than the beefy armed, sloped shouldered action hero he has rigorously trained to be, apparently by consuming 5,000 calories and training two hours per day. Regardless of this slight error in judgment Man of Steel carries itself along well, aided by the efforts of Amy Adams as the courageous Lois Lane, Kevin Costner and Diane Lane as Jonathan and Martha Kent, Kal/Clark Kent’s beloved human parents, and Laurence Fishburne as Perry White, the editor in chief of The Daily Planet, the newspaper that Lois works for.

The story on Earth begins with Kal/Clark as a wandering adult, drifting from city to sea, struggling with his strength and his ‘otherness’. His upbringing with Jonathan and Martha is shown to us in portrially shot flashbacks each time Kal has a conflict, whether emotional or physical. While this is an attempt to alter the conventional structure of past Superman films, and is mostly successful, it does result in further lengthening a already unwieldy film that clocks in at a whopping 2 hours and 23 minutes.

I will not elaborate on the plot; especially since it is fairly obvious from the very first scenes that General Zod is going to make a comeback. I will say though, that in this summer action blockbuster, it is not the action that is most interesting but rather the human relationships, and Kal’s struggle with himself to become the adult that both his fathers dreamed he would become.

To my delight, Russell Crowe, in a slyly cool performance makes a posthumous comeback, which, while slightly preposterous, can be forgiven for its sheer enjoyment. Watch Man of Steel with this in mind, once the plane hits the alien spaceship, you can leave, unless you really really want to see Superman kiss Lois Lane.
Reading in the rain

Two books on the monsoon to read while raindrops keep falling on your roof

The rainy season is made for reading. The romance of reading in the rain is only exceeded perhaps by the romance of singing in it. Nepali Times recommends two classics about the monsoon that should be required reading this monsoon.

There are new books about seasonal summer rain in South Asia, but two stand out: National Geographic photographer and old Nepal hand Steve McCurry’s 1988 picture book, Monsoon and Chasing the Monsoon by Alexander Frater.

For McCurry, it was a visual journey to document in images the life-giving rains that also take lives in Nepal, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh every summer. The anticipation of the moisture-laden clouds as the Indo-Gangetic plains swelter under sauna-like heat. But this heat is necessary to build the low pressure necessary to suck in moisture-laden air from the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. McCurry travels to Pokhara, braves landslides and photographs rice-planting on dizzyingly steep rice terraces, and on through the Kali Gandaki gorge (the Jomsom road had not yet been built) to the rain-shadow. But McCurry doesn’t need words, his pictures tell it all: dust storms in Rajasthan as it waits for the rains, a tailor carrying his sewing machine neck-deep in flood waters in Bangladesh, the emerald wrinkles of paddy terraces of the Manohara Valley in Kathmandu, a boy herding water buffaloes wearing a banana leaf.

But to really learn about the physics of the monsoon, Frater’s book is a thriller in which you follow the author as he waits to rendezvous with the first dark squall line as it arrives in Kovalam beach on the Kerala coast in early June and literally chases it across the subcontinent. On to the Ganges- Brahmaputra delta in Bangladesh, the waterfalls on Cherrapunji which has the highest annual precipitation in the world and the rains are so heavy the hills have no topsoil, along the way why although the rain arrives from the east, it is called the south-west monsoon, and how there are two arms of the monsoons: the eastern one from the Bay and the western arm from the Arabian Sea.

Frater’s fascination of the monsoon goes beyond the subcontinent as it arrives in Kovalam beach on the Kerala coast in early June and literally chases it across the subcontinent. On to the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta in Bangladesh, the waterfalls on Cherrapunji which has the highest annual precipitation in the world and the rains are so heavy the hills have no topsoil, along the way why although the rain arrives from the east, it is called the south-west monsoon, and how there are two arms of the monsoons: the eastern one from the Bay and the western arm from the Arabian Sea.

Frater’s fascination of the monsoon goes back to the days he grew up with his Scottish doctor father in the South Pacific, and he does a good job in expanding the geography of the monsoon beyond the subcontinent to northern Australia, Madagascar, the Philippines and even Central America. You learn about the pressure systems that drive this seasonal rush of moisture that brings the rain that farmers across the world depend on for subsistence.

This is travel writing at its best: a passionate look at something that we take for granted and often curse. While chasing the rains, Frater describes the people he meets, the bureaucrats who try to stall him, a glimpse of the travails of travelling across India in the 1980s. But there are parts of it that are still timely and accurate descriptions of India during this year’s monsoon, which has brought so much havoc already: ‘As a romantic ideal, turbulent, impoverished India can still weave its spell, and key to it all — the colours, the moods, the scents, the subtle mysterious light, the poetry, the heightened expectation, the kind of beauty that made your heart miss a beat — well, that remained the monsoon’.

Until a decade ago French press, drip brew, cupping were alien terms to but a few who indulged in ‘real’ coffee. Chiya was the go-to drink for most Nepalis and even when few who indulged in ‘real’ coffee.

The atmosphere is casual, college-cafeteria like but thanks to its location close to colleges and offices, Red Mud is hugely popular among young professionals and students who drop by to enjoy a cup of joe before heading home for diwali. The atmosphere is casual, college-cafeteria like but thankfully without the noisy crowd. Colourful spray cans and model gramophones line the shelves while framed doodles art done by students of Artlab decorate the bright orange walls.

While it felt sinful to indulge in a tall glass of blended mocha (Rs 185) especially after polishing off a plate of crisp fries (single: Rs 60, double: Rs 100), the colour and count was all but forgotten with a sip of this cocoa flavoured coffee.

At Aashish’s recommendation we tried the house specialty chicken burger (Rs 150). The patty, prepared fresh in the kitchen, was juicy and succulent and had just the right amount of spice to tingle our taste buds.

If you are looking for something healthier, there is an endless selection of sandwiches from tuna, ham, salami, smoked chicken, to tomato and cheese. Unlike regular sandwiches with fillings stuffed in between two slices of bread, Red Mud serves its sandwiches in three slices with the filling spread between. If you are looking to splurge a little pick the chicken burger combo (Rs 210) which comes with a small plate of fries and a drink of your choice.

A bit of advice to Aashish and his crew: please expand the bread section to include brown and rye breads. Those of us looking to keep our waist size in check will pop in more often.

How to get there: Walk towards Thapathali from Malligahar. At the midpoint you will see Trade Tower complex on your right. Red Mud Coffee is on the ground floor of the first building.
If it roars, go indoors

According to Hindu mythology Indra, the god of rain and thunderstorms, hurls thunderbolts at earth to display his vanity. But for mere mortals, flashes of lightnings often lead to loss of life and destruction of property.

Last week, three school children in Bhaulpur died after being hit by lightning. There have been more than 50 lightning related deaths this year already and as heavy monsoon continues to sweep over the country, the toll is likely to cross last year’s estimate of 138.

The primary cause of fatalities during lightning is not burn injuries, but rather heart or respiratory problems. And while 90 per cent of those affected manage to escape alive, many are left with lifelong disabilities.

In Nepal a lot of superstition surrounds this natural phenomenon and awareness among the general public is largely missing.

Being alert of the following information is crucial for keeping oneself out of harm’s way. If you find yourself outdoors during a thunderstorm, you should immediately take shelter indoors. Houses with properly earthed plumbing and wiring systems are the safest hideouts. Fully enclosed solid metal-topped buses or cars are also amazingly good options.

Electrical current travels along the outside of the vehicle’s body, which acts as a metal conductor, and dissipates through the rain water to the ground or flashes off the axles or bumper.

If people don’t have an option of seeking shelter indoors, there is little that can be done to decrease the risk of injury. Taking shade under trees or remaining in open fields is extremely dangerous. Sitting on backpacks or sleeping pads won’t help. A common misconception among many is that if they are swimming or kayaking in the river, they are safe since they are already in water. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

On the other hand, cell phones and other electronic devices do not attract lightning so there is no need to fear gadgets. More importantly, don’t hesitate to lend a hand to victims: they do not carry ‘electrical charge’ and are absolutely safe to touch.
No need to panic

India won’t go topsy turvy in elections next year, just as the world didn’t in 2000 due to the Y2K syndrome

The Indian media’s obsession with Narendra Modi ahead of elections next year threatens to turn him into the political equivalent of what was called the Y2K challenge, the magnitude of which eventually turned out to be overblown.

On 1 January 2000, computer glitches were widely expected to have planes falling off the skies, disrupting public utilities, and even freezing elevators. None of this happened.

In 2013, Modi has spawned similar passions, fears, and analyses reminiscent of the countdown to the end of 1999. Modi’s supporters believe his charisma can sweep aside class, caste, regional, linguistic, even religious, divides to enable the BJP-led NDA to sweep out the UPA from power. His opponents perceive his rise portends the end of the idea of India.

The responses of both his supporters and opponents betray the Y2K syndrome. His appointment as the BJP’s campaign chief will have his opponents harp on the dangers he poses to secularism. This could polarise the voters and help him garner the ‘Hindu vote’, in much the same way as our fear of a chaotic world helped balloon the profits of software firms in 1999.

The BJP believes Modi has it in him to enable it to win seats close to a majority-mark, thereby rendering redundant the need to win support of several allies. This was why the objection of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who was till recently the BJP’s principal ally, to Modi’s appointment was swept aside.

The veracity of their belief can be checked only through the 2014 election. You can’t but sit out the next 12 months to get proof of Modi’s vote-catching ability countrywide. It gives time to Modi’s opponents to bolster their forces, it also opens the possibility of Modi making mistakes. For instance, his intervention in the rescue operations after the floods in Uttarakhand last week hasn’t been as effective as his spin doctors tried to project. Some have accused him of milking the tragedy for political benefit.

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The responses of both his supporters and opponents betray the Y2K syndrome, which had stemmed from a seemingly sound assumption: since digital memory was designed to store years in double-digit – 1999 as 99, 1998 as 98, and so on – it was assumed that at the turn of the millennium, the computer would recognise the year 2000 as 00 or 1900 and, therefore, go haywire.

Similarly, it is made to appear that Modi’s much-vaunted charisma would neutralise identity politics and inspire the voter to behave in unforeseeable ways, just as computers afflicted with the Y2K bug were feared would.

No doubt, BJP cadre and the middle class find Modi mesmerising. But they are just a subset of the Indian electorate.

The BJP hasn’t even acquired a critical mass in, say, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, or Andhra Pradesh, for it to gain from the advantage Modi-led election campaign is expected to spawn. In the recent Karnataka assembly election, he articulated the Hindutva ideology during his campaign in Mangalore, yet the city elected Congress candidates, two Muslims and a Christian.

More significantly, every social group perceives its leader most charismatic. For instance, Mayawati is to the Dalits of Uttar Pradesh what Modi is to a section of the middle class. It’s unlikely he can wean away the Dalits from her. Further, charisma is just one of the many factors voters take into account at the time of casting their ballot.

Modi’s supporters say his appeal is based on his proven record of governance. It is the reason, they say, the corporate world loves him, and the pink papers portray him as the leader who can treat the economy. Not to support Modi is depicted as voting for economic stagnation. Don’t forget, in 1999 too, software experts fanned the Y2K fear to bag lucrative contracts.

In Modi, the middle class see a leader who can preserve and promote their interests.

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When he is sent on duty to the newly expanded Kamal Pokhari-Shital Niwas road, traffic policeman Shiva Kumar Thakur feels lucky. The days of traffic jams on this particular stretch are over, he just stands there and waves cars through. But it is during rush hour that Thakur gets stressed. A never-ending stream of motorcycles clog up every inch of the road, buses stop anywhere but at designated bays, traffic starts backing up and he has to try to clear way for VIP convoys as escort vehicles with sirens arrive.

The clean and smooth road around Baluwatar during off-peak hours presents the ideal of what Kathmandu’s road-widening was trying to achieve, but the rush hour congestion there is proof of why just broadening the road is not the solution. “Most of the time it’s very quiet on these newly expanded roads,” says Thakur, “but everyone wants to go first during rush hour and it gets as bad as Thapathali and Chabahil.”

The wider roads just mean more private vehicles are using it. Nearly 750,000 vehicles are registered in Bagmati Zone, with 570,000 of them motorcycles, 14,000 are public vehicles that circulate inside the valley, 8,000 are buses to and from outside the capital, and the rest are private vehicles. Kathmandu’s total road length has crept up to almost 1,500km but 10,000 new motorcycles are added each year and registration will be open for more following road expansion.

With statistics like that, transportation experts say the road widening may actually worsen traffic. A city of three million people doesn’t have a proper mass urban transit system and unless new feeder roads along the Bagmati and Bishnumati corridors are added to ease congestion in the city core, Kathmandu’s traffic is going to be out of control.

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Wider roads, heavier traffic

Why is Kathmandu pursuing a policy of road widening instead of learning from best practice in urban renewal and avoiding mistakes made in other urban areas? The world has learnt the hard way that road widening is not the answer to relieving traffic congestion: on the contrary. The answer is better public transport, walking, and biking paths. Excerpt from Road Expansion, Urban Growth, and Induced Travel (Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol 69, No 2, Spring 2003):

Traffic is thought to behave more like a gas than a liquid: it expands to fill available space. Improved roads simply spur additional travel or divert trips from parallel routes, quickly returning a facility to its original congested condition. This is called ‘induced demand’. You can’t pave your way out of traffic congestion: ‘build it and they will come’.

The preponderance of empirical evidence to date suggests that the effects of induced demand are substantial. A widely cited study based on 18 years of data from 14 California metropolitan areas, found that every ten per cent increase in lane miles was associated with a nine per cent increase in vehicle miles travelled four years after road expansion, controlling for other factors.

Another study of 70 US metropolitan areas over a 13-year time period concluded that areas investing heavily in road capacity fared no better in easing traffic congestion than areas that did not. Using a meta-analysis of more than 100 road expansion projects in the United Kingdom, it was found that proportional savings in travel time were matched by proportional increases in traffic on almost a one-to-one basis, a finding that prompted the UK government to jettison its longstanding ‘predict and provide’ policy of responding to traffic-growth forecasts by building more motorways.

FOOT POWER

It’s important to note that walking and biking, which are cheap and have essentially no carbon footprint, should be given top priority prioritised highest of all in our ways of getting around. That doesn’t necessarily mean building sidewalks everywhere, but it does mean that planners should always be thinking with their feet. How will this new development face the street?

Will the design reinforce our human curiosity and make it an interesting place to walk or bike past, or will it silently push people away with blank walls? Do our streets have safe ways for people to get across? The current generation has to work on flipping our transportation system upside-down …

Mike Hicks, streets.mn
No populism

Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 June

Interview with Finance Minister Shankar Koirala

How are you preparing this year’s budget?

Shankar Koirala: Last year’s budget came in three instalments and was bad for the economy, so this year we want to announce it on time. We have received various proposals from each ministry and for three hours every day we hold ministry-level discussions so that the budget comes out by 15 July.

How is this year’s budget going to be different than the previous editions?

Since we don’t have an elected parliament, this year’s budget will be passed through an ordinance. It will be election-centric. Besides that, we will also accelerate development and prioritise energy, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, and export sectors. Instead of catering to populist demands, this year’s budget will address national development.

Can you make the budget project centred?

This is our chance to provide some sort of consistency to budget announcements. We have had various people asking us to prioritise certain sectors, but there is very little political pressure. So we will focus on proposals passed at local, regional, and central levels as well as those authorised by the National Planning Commission.

In the past, parties have siphoned off parts of the budget for their own cadre. How can you stop this culture?

We have stopped all forms of financial support including donations and won’t create ‘distributaries’ budget like in the past. This year’s programs have not been shaped by political greed or pressure.

Is it true that this government doesn’t have the power to change tax rates or announce a full budget?

No, the amendment to the constitution gave us powers to come up with a full-fledged budget. But we don’t plan to change tax rates.

Every year, development money ends up unused. How will you solve this problem?

This year’s budget will come on time. So we will ask the ministries to develop fully formed plans by 16 July and then give them the full power to implement those plans.

The losers

Jay Prakash Gupta, Facebook, 26 June

I posted this status a couple of days ago and it got more than 60 likes and 60 comments.

53 Armed Police Force inspectors were promoted to the post of Deputy Superintendent of Police namely: Sigdel, Shrestha, Pokhare, Kanal, Adhikary, Bohara, Wagle, Lamali, Khadka, Subedi, Shrestha, Bajracharya, Shrestha, Thapa, Joshi, Poudel, Dhanal, Pandey, Bhandari, KC, Sharma, Joshi, Dhital, Bajracharya, Lamichhane, Rajamathi, Shahi, Shrestha, Thakali, Pandey, Baburam Singh, Ghimire, Khanal, Chaudhary, Sapkota, Giri, Dhimal, Cham, Lohani, Thapa, Bhandari, Bajracharya, Banerj, Dhungana, Thapa, Dwi, Karmacharya, Nepal, Thapa, and Parajuli.

I simply omitted the first names and put the surnames as published by Naya Patrika daily on 23 June. My concern here is not limited to the number of inspectors who got promoted or the community they belong to. I am more worried about the decision-making representation of Madhesis and Janajatis in the overall political scenario.

In 2007, the population of the Hill region was 52 per cent and it got 117 seats in the constituent assembly whereas the Tara where almost 49 per cent of Nepalives live just got 88 seats. Only after the Madhes movement did people come to realise how unfair this situation was and the number of seats was increased to 116. But now that the size of the constituent assembly is being slashed to 491 members from 601, it is quite obvious who will be the biggest losers.

The number of seats for Madhesis is likely to decrease by five to six per cent even though the region is home to more than 50 per cent of the population. The same is true for the Dalit community whose representatives is likely to go down from 83.1 per cent.

Now the question here is why should these communities bear the brunt of downsizing the CA?

100 days of disappointment

Editorial, Rajdhani, 26 June

Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, Kail Raj Regmi-led government also published a booklet on its 100 days in office where it tries to bask in the glory of announcing election dates.

Every year, development money ends up unused. How will you solve this problem?

This year’s budget will come on time. So we will ask the ministries to develop fully formed plans by 16 July and then give them the full power to implement those plans.

And this is not the time for him and his band of ex-bureaucrats to pat each other on the back and bask in the glory of announcing election dates. Yes this government is bounded by certain obligations, but if we analyse these 100 days carefully, we see that it has failed to address critical issues related to the public like the proliferation of black market or worsening air pollution, and then give them the full power to implement those plans.
FOREVER EVOLVING.
NEVER STANDING STILL.
KEEP WALKING.
The Regmi regime is sure made up of super-achievers. The techno-cats held a press conference last week to mark the 100th day of their honeymoon period and distributed a 100-page document listing their achievements. Impressive as it is (the interim council has notched one achievement every other day) a lot of the real accomplishments of the chief minister’s government could not be included in the list because of lack of space. The Ass has got exclusive access to the achievements that didn’t make it to the document:

101: Ensured that the South-west Monsoon arrived in timely fashion this year.

102: Prevented Edward Snowden from sneaking into Nepal through the backdoor.

103: Inaugurated 2 art exhibitions, 1 album launch, and 3 handicraft fairs.

104: Played madal with fellow-Syangjalis.

105: Declared war on Kollywood movie billboards.

106: Patched irritating pothole at Bhatbhateni intersection.

107: Chairman Regmi actively smiled during a photo-op with visiting Chinese dignitary.

108: Only 12 bunds in 100 days.

109: Declared KTM plastic bag-free, then promptly retracted the ban to protect jobs.

110: Took the trouble to count our achievements and publish this list.

Now that they have abandoned the underground jungle and made their homes in the concrete jungle that is Kathmandu, Baddie comrades can’t seem to get enough of flying around in helicopters. PKD doesn’t need an excuse to get into an Ecuriel, BRB may have chosen a Mustang to ride around Kathmandu, but he was in the habit of commandeering Mi-17s for his monthly sleep-over with the proletariat, Comrade Rainman once took a seven-minute chopper ride to cut a red ribbon in southern Lalitpur. So there was nothing surprising about Chairman Fearsomeness asking Kill Raj to loan him a Super Puma so he could visit flood victims in Darchula. To his credit, KRR showed he is still awake by giving PKD a firm but polite “no” and then the Erection Commissioners on Wednesday issued an edict banning the use of choppers during election campaigning. The loudest howls of protest came from the Baddies. Could it be because they were once in the habit of chopping off the limbs of class enemies that they can’t keep away from choppers?

So it came to pass that the ‘black spot’ in the president’s larger intestine was not malignant, in fact Japanese doctors couldn’t even find the black spot which is clearly visible in the x-rays done in Nepal. The Ass can make a fairly good guess what the black spot really was: the hospital in Kathmandu hadn’t serviced the x-ray machine and there was a stain in the film. Anyway, the long and short of it is that the country ended up paying Rs 10 million for treatment that not only could have been done in Nepal, but which wasn’t even necessary.

BTW, is anyone checking if all members of the Prez entourage actually return to Nepal?