Nepali Times' guide to get away from it all this Dashain-Tihar with tips on everything from hill stations in Nepal to Indian Ocean beach resorts.

The closer we get to elections in November, the further it seems to recede.
THE ELECTION MIRAGE

Let's hope history doesn’t repeat itself in November as a farce
doesn’t feel like a country that has elections coming in 66 days. Kirit Raj Regmi’s planned 10-day vanishing act at the most crucial time for election preparations is not just a bad idea, it is totally irresponsible. His Home and Foreign Minister had the good sense to cancel his trip in Nepal is so desperate to grandstand at the General Assembly, he is not listening to anyone. Which is just like him.

Other events that have transcended over the past week do not bode well, either. The CAA through the Revenue Investigation Department is engaging in a witch-hunt, trampling high-handedly on the laws of the land to harass lawyers like Sambhu Thapa. The fact that Thapa was at the forefront of the civil society-led pro-democracy uprising in 2006, which the current head of the CAA isaccused of suppressing, leads one to conclude that this is political vendetta at its cruelest and a threat to others to toe the line.

The government’s inept handling of the Krishna Adhikari murder case showed that this non-political government is actually cravenly beholden to politicians and out to protect powerful people from being answerable to conflict-era crimes. The international community’s conspicuous silence on human rights, justice, and corruption because it doesn’t want anything to offset elections has emboldened Regmi and his crew.

The Supreme Court’s dissolution of 17 writ petitions, including the five-month postponement of a hearing on the appointment of the Chief Justice as government head, was a significant reminder that there is no longer any separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive.

We expected a technocrat-led government to be more efficient and less corrupt. We hoped that having a Chief Justice as head of government would at least mean that there would be rule of law. None of that happened.

They say history repeats itself as a farce. That, unfortunately, may be the fate of the November election.

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

You are throwing pearls to swine ("Skeletons in the closet", Editorial, #672). A Maoist ideologue who believes that the Cambodian genocide is western propaganda cannot be reformed. Let’s just hope they don’t get elected to perpetrate similar crimes killing in Nepal. Good editorial, but nothing on war crimes.

Questions

Jit

What Nepal needs is to follow in Egypt’s footsteps and organise a ‘counter-revolution’ even if it means with the support of the Indians.

Counter

And the gullible folks in our beloved Gaiastra Land had pinned high hopes on the learned Dr Baburam Bhattarai. He was part of the Cong type, a young and fearless people’s leader who could turn this country around. He has turned out to be an advocate of #673.

Sharan

Any discussion on Maoism reminds me of the review by Ian Johnson of Jasper Becker’s book on the Chinese famine literature based on official Chinese archives. Not so easy to call that “western propaganda”.

Six

RAW DEAL

do not agree with Anurag Acharya that by and large, the Indians are as expectarated with our politics as we are New Delhi’s interest as well as capacity to dictate the course of politics in Kathmandu is often overstated.” (Raw Deal, #672). We do not know if this is the case. The Indians want permanent controlled chaos in Nepal. They supported the Maoist war and removed the king. And now they are comfortable with Nepali politicians steering in their own s What have the Indians got to lose? Nothing. In fact, they gain a lot via access to markets for their goods and services.

Counter

Nepal Congress has always been the favourite for India’s own Congress politicians… Anyone who has the upper hand is ignorant of the Nepal-India relationship.

Counter

I don’t think even the Indians quite know what they want. The strategy of causing turmoil so that Nepal can become an obdurate lapdog hasn’t really worked because instability and weak governments in Nepal strengthen anti-Indian forces and enable them to operate from Nepal, not India itself. Unless the higher-ups in Delhi can tame RAW and change its focus towards stability in Nepal, India’s needlessly interferes will only come back to bite its hand.

Adeleah

India doesn’t have good relations with any of its neighbours, that because of its unnecessary interventions in their internal affairs and its big brother attitude. India should change the way it deals with Nepal and change the Nepali people’s perception, otherwise it what it is all gets.

Sanjít

You can scarcely counter ideas ofloyd and the ambience in which it thrives is also transformed.” (The Indian view, #672). Very true and the transformation first has to occur within Islamic societies. The problem of Islamic radicalism and its solution both lie within the Muslim communities and not elsewhere.

Batsya

As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap! British divide and rule policy is still thriving and the logic is still the same. The Indian occupation of the two wings of Pakistan has been a successful and effective policy.

Counter

Dev

‘Very depressing report. Isn’t the state supposed to protect vulnerable citizens? You can’t just blame lack of opportunities in Nepal, it is also the state’s responsibility. Smt. Thapa has accepted they are vulnerable and sexually exploited and perceived and treated in a dehumanised manner. Would we be judgmental if one of the dancers was someone close to us? Depends whether you have got a lot of callousness or empathy in you.

R Rai

DANCING GIRLS

Great piece. As the author says we shouldn’t be judgemental about these young Nepali women dancing in bars in Tanzania (Dancing in Dar, Smt. Thapa, #672). They seem to be strong enough to adapt to whatever the world has to offer.

Yam Gurung

Dep

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R Rai

Of all places, Nepal dancing girls in Africa now. It just shows how desperate Nepali youngsters are. I would not blame the people who are keen to exploit. It is common knowledge in Nepal by now that seeking foreign employment can have ‘harmassment’ as a default clause.

Salt

#674. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Weekly Internet Poll

What is the biggest threat to free and fair elections?

#673

What are the chances of free, fair, and independent elections in Nepal in 2013?

Very depressing report. Isn’t the state supposed to protect vulnerable citizens? You can’t just blame lack of opportunities in Nepal, it is also the state’s responsibility. Smt. Thapa has accepted they are vulnerable and sexually exploited and perceived and treated in a dehumanised manner. Would we be judgmental if one of the dancers was someone close to us? Depends whether you have got a lot of callousness or empathy in you.

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A midst the hoo-hah this week about the raid by the Department of Revenue Investigation on law firms, chartered accountants, and other businesses, one issue that was further eclipsed was corruption and plunder that the Maoist party has engaged in after the conflict ended.

It has been more than a year since Amik Sherchan was appointed to head an internal probe team to assess the level of corruption within the party. The committee report has been ready for a while now, but it has never been made public. Now, with elections around the corner, it is very likely that Pushpa Kamal Dahal will use the report to single out a few sacrificial lambs over Dasain.

That report was supposed to have been presented to the Hetauda Congress earlier this year, but although the issue of internal corruption within the party did come up, the report seems to have been put into deep freeze. After this, the voice to reveal the report’s contents and name names became older and more strident.

In response, the wily Dahal said that it was not necessary to make the report public since no cases of serious embezzlement were raised anyway. No senior leader could counter the Chairman’s edict, although there was some grumbling in the ranks. Goes to show just how strong the cult of personality is within the Maoist party, no one dares to point out that the emperor has no clothes.

However, within the party congress there were strong voices against corruption, extravagant lifestyles, and a lack of transparency in financial dealings on the part of the hierarchy.

Sherchan brought himself to make the absurd statement that no senior leader was guilty and the laughter and ridicule that greeted this statement in Hetauda were indications of the internal party mood. It was obvious that the report was a clumsy attempt at whitewash.

Last week in Nepalganj, Dahal used a campaign speech to project his party’s clean image by raking up the Sherchan report and warned that heads would roll, figuratively speaking, within the party.

He went on to warn that he would unveil the report and guilty comrades would face punishment. It looks like the Chairman is on a witch-hunt ahead of elections to exorcise his own party and point the finger at arch rivals, killing two birds with one stone: sacrifice leaders who are expendable or threaten his dominance while at the same time send a message to the public that the party doesn’t tolerate corruption.

It is well known that Dahal himself, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Hisila Yami, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, and Barsaman Pun control the party’s coffers and fundraising efforts. Which is why their names top the list of corrupt comrades in the public perception. However, the Sherchan Commission, doesn’t name any of them, nor does it have the mandate to punish them.

The biggest scandal so far is the scam in the cantonments where as much as Rs 4 billion set aside for ex-guerrillas who didn’t exist vanished into thin air. Dahal is likely to point the finger of blame at PLA commanders who are not completely loyal and maybe thinking of defecting.

There is no doubt that some commanders had itchy fingers, but the rot went right up to the top of the party leadership. Dahal has always been a utilitarian leader and this is a perfect opportunity for him personally to come out smelling like roses.
Talking about toilets

UK-based journalist and author Rose George doubles up as a global champion for sanitation. Her book *The Big Necessity: Adventures in the World of Human Waste* (2008) is regarded as a primer on managing human waste. She calls diarrhoea a “weapon of mass destruction.” The lack of access to toilets is at the root of the global public health crisis, killing millions of children under five. George was in Kathmandu this week to study menstrual taboos. WaterAid’s Ashutosh Tiwari and Govind Shrestha interviewed her for *Nepali Times*. Excerpts:

**Nepali Times:** Since the time you started the research for your book, what has changed globally about sanitation? 

**Rose George:** Public perception toward sanitation has changed positively in the last 10 years. In 2004, hardly anybody was making the connection between water and sanitation, let alone with health. NGOs talked about dirty water, brackish water, and the like. The conversation was primarily about supplying clean water and expanding water supply. There was much prudishness around talking openly about keeping toilet waste separate from water supply mains.

Now, through his Reinventing the Toilet program, Bill Gates talks about toilet and that has made a huge difference. Through his charity, Matt Damon has started talking about sanitation. The king of the Netherlands has been a sanitation champion for years. More than 180 countries have signed on with the UN to mark 19 November as annual World Toilet Day.

Policy makers have started to understand that a relatively small investment on sanitation pays off big in an increase in school attendance, women’s empowerment, and having a productive workforce. These changes have been gradual and with 2.5 billion people around the world still lacking access to toilets there is lots to be done. But over time, it’s been clear that sanitation has emerged as an issue worth funding and an issue worth talking openly about. An evidence for this is that sanitation has been added as the unambiguous goal number six in the UN’s post-2015 development agenda, whereas previously, in the MDGs, it was there as an afterthought.

In the last two years, we’ve seen an unprecedented momentum toward declaring villages and towns open defecation-free (ODF) areas in Nepal. Does this alone solve sanitation problems?

We have to see ODF as the sharp end of the wedge. On one hand, its effects are tangible. It tips the scale in terms of community members addressing their own sanitation problems. The entire community is indeed galvanised for change and every ODF declaration is accompanied by a sense of real collective...
George tells us in her gripping book, progress, our inability to separate what we digest from human faeces has been the single biggest killer of human lives in the toilet, and yet we pretend that what comes out of our butts is our business. It's time, she says, to tackle the last great taboo: shit.

Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters.

When even has gradually stopped being a taboo, high-heeled shoes were invented in Europe in the 19th century because there was so much open defecation in the streets of cities.

For George, it is a criminal waste to defecate in the open. She meets two million people in the United States every day, we spend three years of our lives in the toilet, and yet we pretend that what comes out doesn't exist. Out of sight is out of mind.

In developed countries toilet training is a desirable good. We do it all at least once a day, we spend three years of our lives in the toilet, and yet we pretend that what comes out doesn't exist. Out of sight is out of mind.

The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters.

Squeamishness about bowel emptying kills, is George's message (see interview). We need to make the problem the solution and sanitary solution to as many customers as possible by branding it differently from what is available out there. Given that so many people have mobile phones and not toilets, the challenge for NGOs is to make toilets as desirable and as a marker of social status, as mobile phones are. For this, they can look for ways to work with entrepreneurs and private sector to market and sell sanitation as a desirable good.

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LAND OF HER MOTHER

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa’s tribute to her mother and her homeland

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa uses poetry because words don’t suffice. As the first Tibetan poetess to be published in English, she transcends language and the barriers of space and time to return to Phayul, her fatherland.

Her first book of poetry Rules of the House was published in 2002 and other books came thick and fast: My Rice Tastes Like the Lake, In The Absent Day, In Writing the Names and Recurring Gestures. But even when she writes prose, like her latest book A Home in Tibet, the sentences are crafted like verse with delicious descriptions of the mountains and lakes of Tibet, and evocative memories of her mother.

Tsering Wangmo’s mother, Tsering Choden Dhompa, died in a tragic car crash on new year’s day in 1994 on the Grand Trunk Road on her way from Dharamsala. Mother and daughter were very close and hoped one day to go back together to their ancestral village in Kham in eastern Tibet which Tsering Choden had left when she was 14, making the great trek over the mountains to Nepal like thousands of other Tibetans.

Tsering Wangmo travels to a land of her mother and looks at everything through her mother’s eyes: dewy petals on the plateau’s high pastures, yaks grazing in lonely valleys, the shadows of clouds creeping up the green landscape of a brief Tibetan summer.

In Kyegu, she sees flowers which her mother has shown her in exile in Nepal and Dharamsala, noticing that they are even prettier in Tibet. This paragraph from her prologue to A Home in Tibet has some of the most wrenching sentences I have read about the pain of exile.

“The flowers in Tibet were always taller, more fragrant and vivid. Her descriptions, imprecise but unchanging from year to year had led me to an inevitable acceptance that her past was unequalled by our present lives. She would tell me of the knee-deep fields of purple, red and white — plants never named or pointed out to during our years in India and Nepal — that over time served to create an idea of her fatherland, phayul, as a riotous garden. I pictured her wilderness paradise by comparing them not to the marigolds, daisies and bluebells I crushed with my fingers, but to the shapes of household artefacts around me: lollipop, broom, bottle. Disparate objects that surrendered to and influenced the idea, space and hope of a more abundant and happy place.”

Tsering Wangmo’s mother kept assuring her daughter that they would return to Tibet some day and that their nomadic life in exile was temporary. She writes: “It was easy to accept that idea in our two-room house in Dharamsala where everything we owned fit into the four aluminum steel suitcases under our two twin cots.” It is almost as if Tsering Choden somehow knew she would never go back and wanted to instill in her daughter a deep love for the phayul she had never seen.

So, after the death of her mother Tsering Wangmo makes a journey to Kham which is actually a pilgrimage to the land of her ancestors and a journey to recognise the old Tibet of her mother’s memories and the new Tibet that it has become since 1959. She has never been here, but everything is familiar to her. It is a homecoming that mother and daughter had together imaged and imagined.

It is difficult to read A Home in Tibet without a deep dull ache inside when you come to sentences like these: “Here in Tibet live the people my mother taught me to love before I met them. We are family, and love has undetermined aptitude and great hunger.”

You need not be Tibetan to recognise the universal emptiness of homelessness and the joys of reunion with one’s roots. Confront cruelty with kindness, harshness with hope, it seems to be Tsering Wangmo’s message as she ends the book with a final prayer: “There is great strength in believing that things will eventually right themselves. Because they must.”

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa went to college at the University of Massachusetts and did her MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. She is now teaching and pursuing a doctorate in English Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Every year mother and daughter undertook a long pilgrimage from Dharamsala to Bodh Gaya and Kathmandu and the two got a chance to bond well on the road. Travelling overland, meeting monks and fellow exiles from Kham, Tsering Wangmo now thinks her mother was trying to imprint her daughter with a Tibetan identity inseparable from a devotion to Buddhism. Her mother may also have been preparing her for the future: “She wanted me to have people who loved me so that if something happened to her, I would have familiar faces to turn to. In this way my mother took care of my future.”

Many of those familiar faces will be present at the launch of A Home in Tibet in Kathmandu on Friday.

When she finally travels to her mother’s birthplace, Tsering Wangmo discovers where she came from: “I have come to rely on Dhompa with the foolish comfort that comes in knowing there is a place in the world where generations of my family have lived and died. That thought serves to ground me when I feel unmoored by my transnational nomadic existence.”

Kunda Dixit

Excerpt: A Home in Tibet

There is an uncommonly harsh beauty to the Tibetan landscape. Its nakedness makes it seem incapable of deception, but under its calm deportment it conceals winds so brutal that yaks are known to die while their jaws are in masticating bliss. On hot summer days the sun kicks up the rain within minutes. No puddles are formed, no moisture lingers in the air. It is only the droplets on tiny leaves of the baby radish plant that betray rain.

A Home in Tibet

by Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

Penguin Books India, 2013

325 pages

INR 499 hardback

13 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2013 #673
All of us forecasters got it wrong last week, we were taken by surprise by that high pressure system that crept out of nowhere to chase back the monsoonal front about two weeks ahead of schedule. This caused the low pressure area to linger over eastern Nepal, unleashing a deluge over the entire country. The resulting flooding caused substantial damage to roads and bridges. This week, the monsoon is playing tug-o-war with this premature westerly, expect bright mornings, cloud buildup towards afternoon, and some localised night storms.

KATHMANDU

RAJAN KATHET in MUSTANG

In Mustang, the monsoon is almost over. As the clouds lift to reveal blindingly blue skies, visitors get ready to enjoy the biggest festival in Nepal’s trans-Himalayan region: Yartung. But it is here in Mustang that the festival is celebrated with most passion, a fervour that wasn’t dampened this year even by the prolonged closure of Jomsom airport.

“Yartung is one big party,” explains Amchi Gyatso Bista, chairman and co-founder of Lo Kunphen medical school in Lo Manthang. “The rains are gone and after months of toiling in the fields, the land is ready for harvest, it’s the perfect time for celebration.”

Festivities first start in Lo Manthang, where everyone from the royal family to monks and villagers gather at the centre of the walled town with their horses. The procession then advances to an open field on the outskirts, where tents ruffle in the afternoon breeze.

Like every year, there are tourists jostling to capture the moment in their cameras. After a fair amount of drinking, men and women perform the traditional shebru dance, but by far the most popular event is the horse race. Daylight finally fades and the procession heads back to town.

“During Yartung horses are possessed by a powerful racing spirit,” says Chekyap Gurung, 58, from Khimkhar village. “Even the lazier pack horses are rearing to go.”

Yartung is a travelling festival and it is held in Khimkhar near Muktinath two days later, followed by Jharkot and Ranipauwa. The procession from Jharkot village is headed by the heir to its ancient royal family of Mustang. One man from each family heads to Muktinath temple on horseback and the procession eventually congregates at Ranipauwa, the tourist hub.

Eating, drinking, and merrymaking culminate in different competitions involving horses. There are races and events requiring riders on horseback to pick up scarves with money inside. The biggest and the final competition involves an uphill horse race from Khimkhar to Ranipauwa and attracts competitors from as far as Manang and even the Nepal Army, and it brings to close this magnificent festival.

Football and archery competitions are also held between the villages. Yartung attracts visitors from all over and many Mustangis from Kathmandu and abroad travel home for the festival. Lodges are fully packed throughout Mustang during this period. “Tourists from Pokhara and Kathmandu have been calling for a week to book rooms,” says Tsering Gurung, a hotel-owner.

This culturally and economically important festival almost died out some years ago, it is to the credit of Mustang’s youth that it was revived. “The older generation was not that excited about our festival,” reveals Chekyap Gurung, “but now, with the growing popularity of Mustang as a tourist destination, younger Mustangis are returning home to build their land.”

ARTUNG

PICS: RAJAN KATHET

Festivities go on in Mustang even after the festival is over
DINING

Mike’s Breakfast, huge breakfasts and an endless supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting: characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. Nepal, (01)4424309

Yin Yang Restaurant, east meets west as you choose from a variety of Thai and continental dishes. Add a little spice to your life with the pad thai or green curry. If you can’t handle the heat, fall into the safety net of its western dishes. Thamel, 11am to 2pm, (01)4795541

YAK RESTAURANT, serves authentic Chinese food, try the mala tofu, chicken with fungus and spicy pork spare ribs. Boudha, Kathmandu

Club Amsterdam and Café Bar, great food, exotic cocktails, live band, BBQ, and more. Lakeside, Pokhara, (061)465347

Dragon Chinese Restaurant, try the Kung Pao Pork if alone and the Mai Cao if with company. Lakeside, Pokhara

Tian Rui, if you’re looking for genuinely good Chinese food this restaurant is the place to go. Thapathali

PERI PERI, home of legendary Portuguese flame grilled chicken, enjoy dishes served with the tradmark Piri Piri sauce. Jhamsikhel, (061)558508

EVENTS

Children’s Day, remember when you were young? you shone like the sun. 14 September

A People War, an exhibition of photographs that portrays the reality of Nepal through 10 years of insurgency. Every day except Tuesday, 11am to 4pm. (01)4549948, www.madanpuraskar.org

Everyday Life, a travelling exhibition that showcases exclusive material on archiving and its intrinsic value to the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. 12 to 14 September, 12 to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

The Election and the Referendum, an exhibition showcasing the art of elections in Nepal from the vaults of the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. 11am to 6pm, (01)5549948, www.madanpuraskar.org

Lived stories everyday lives, an exhibition showcasing the art of archiving and its intrinsic value to daily life, a travelling exhibition that was previously showcased in India and will next travel to Bangladesh. 12 to 15 September, 11am to 6pm, Special exhibition

The Election and the Referendum, showcasing exclusive material on elections in Nepal from the vaults of the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. 11am to 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

Indra jatra, celebrate the founding of Kathmandu City. 18 September, Basantapur Durbar Square

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS, watch an inspirational documentary that follows the lives and careers of a collective group of do-it-yourself artists and designers who inadvertently affected the art world. 23 September, 5:30pm, Satyajit Media Arts, Ramshikhe. (01)3333286, 9843487288, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyRAHKTy6hI

Return to nature, join 22 Nepali artists in a one-day open-air watercolour workshop. 24 September, 9:30am, Kirtipur, 11am to 1pm, Kirtipur Art School and Gallery, 9841666573, www.parkgallery.com

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS, photography workshop. Rs 4,000, 22 September to 2 October, Lajimpat, Registration: (01)4002037, 9851182100, 9851180088

The Election and the Referendum, showcasing exclusive material on elections in Nepal from the vaults of the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. 11am to 6pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

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Planet Nepal 2.0, celebrate the arts and environment, with photo exhibition, film screening, discussions, water fair, and dance performance. 25 September, 11am to 7pm, Alliance Francaise, Tripureswor,

Basantapur Darbar Square, Boudha, Kathmandu

Chakupat, Lalitpur

13 September, 5.30pm, Russian Cultural Centre, Kamal Pokhari

18 September,

14 September,

13 September,

14 September,

13 September,

14 September,

18 September,

5 September, 12 to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

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5 September

12 to 7pm, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal

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Tuborg stage shows, your favourite Nepali rockstars at a town near you. 
24 September, Dharan, Public School; 
21 September, Pokhara, Pradarshani Maidan; 5 October, Kathmandu, Dasrath Stadium

SHANTI AND SCOTT, catch the musician father and daughter play tunes from the sixties. Rs 200, 13 September, 7 to 8.30pm, Moksh, Jhamsikhel

HAATIBAN RESORT, tucked away near a jungle at the side of a hill with a 270 degree view of the Valley this is the ideal weekend getaway for Kathmandu residents. Pharping, Kathmandu, (01)4700525/1247

Himalayan wellness centre, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel. Budhanilkantha, open all week. 9801046666, www.himalayanwellness.com.np

Mum’s Garden Resort, head out to Pokhara for a peaceful and comfortable stay in beautifully designed cottages surrounded by a lush green garden with great views of Phewa Lake and the Annapurna range. Lila 5/6, Pokhara. 061463468, www.mumsgardeneresort.com

LAST RESORT, canyoning, hiking, rock climbing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping – test your limits at the Last Resort. Bhotekosi, Sindhupalchok, (01)4700525/1247

THE KATHMANDU BOOK SWAP wants you bookworms to come together to talk books, swap them, and drink a lot of coffee. Take along at least one book that you’re willing to lend and take your pick through a best of 3 rock-paper-scissors. Books are expensive and some of them hard to find, why miss this chance to see what other like minded people bring to the table?

Date: 14 September, second Saturday of every month
Time: 2.30pm
Venue: Cafe Soma, Jhamiskhel
http://ktmbookswap.wordpress.com/2013/08/29/september-bookswap/

Japanese artist and filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki announced retirement recently, leaving behind a large body of work spanning 50 years. To honour the great artist Hayao Miyazaki, Sattya is showing his greatest animes all on one day.

11.00am to 12.50pm Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro
12.50pm to 1.20pm Lunch Break
1.20pm to 3.20pm Princess Mononoke
3.20pm to 5.20pm Castle in the Sky
5.20pm to 7.20pm Howl’s Moving Castle

Date: 14 September 2013
Venue: Sattya Media Arts Collective, Jawalakhel (01)5523486, 9813485716

League football is back after international fixtures of little entertainment and limited consequence.

Serie A: It’s Milano vs Torino this week in the Serie A, with AC Milan hosting Torino and Juventus visiting Inter Milan. 14 September, 9.45pm; 15 September, 00.45am

La liga: Gareth Bale will look to hit the ground running on his debut against Villareal. 15 September, 2.45am

EPL: Chelsea will try to deal with the setbacks of the international break by visiting Everton, while Manchester United will want to tear Crystal Palace apart to soothe theirtransfer disappointments. 14 September, 10.15pm, 5.30pm

BREAKFAST & LUNCH
7AM - 2PM EVERYDAY
Jet, set, let’s travel... 

**SRI LANKA**

**HOW TO GET THERE:** fly from Kathmandu to Delhi/Mumbai and then onwards to Colombo. Or from Kathmandu to Bangkok and then to Colombo

**ROUND TRIP:** starts from Rs 46,400

**POKHARA**

A few days in Bandipur, you could drive on to Pokhara just 1.5 hours away, sample some of the new adventure sports on offer there, or stay at the new fine hotels that have sprung up.

**WATERFRONT RESORT**
View of the lake. Check. Peaceful environment. Check. Luxury guaranteed? Check. Waterfront Resort ticks all the right boxes and is the place to stay in the lake city. www.klngh.com/wfbeach-resort-pokhara.html

**POKHARA GRANDE**
Peace and quiet inside the bustling city of Pokhara. Food, spa, you name it and Grande will provide.
www.pokharagrande.com

**ATTITHI RESORT**
A 10 minute stroll from the bustling city centre, the resort is a quiet sanctuary perfect for anyone looking for a relaxing stay. Only few months into operation, Attithi has managed to create a name for itself as being one of the best luxury hotels in town. www.attithiresort.com

**FULBARI RESORT**
The ultimate getaway in Pokhara, Fulbari is far from everything but at the centre of all that matters. Golf, anyone?
www.fulbari.com

**TEMPLE TREE RESORT**
An oasis in the otherwise cacophonous Lakeside. Temple Tree Resort is an ideal getaway for couples, families looking for downtime and health and wellness enthusiasts. The resort fuses tradition, simplicity, and modern comfort with ease.
www.templetreenepal.com

**BANDIPUR**
Back down to the highway to continue on to Bandipur, which used to be a Newar trading town but has, in the last five years, been transformed into a popular hill station that has avoided so far being tempted by Thamel tendencies. Some old houses have been renovated and converted into fine B&Bs, like The Old Inn which is reminiscent of black and white Tudor buildings in England. The cobblestoned, pedestrianised main street is elegant, and there is the breathtaking view of the Central Himalaya from Annapurna in the west to Langtang and beyond in the east. The Siddha caves are a short and scenic hike away. Bandipur now offers a good range of inns, guesthouses, and homestays. Bandipur Mountain Resort located at the north side of the Tushikhel is the oldest.
Bandipur Mountain Resort
01-4220162
island@mos.com.np

**INDIA**

**HOW TO GET THERE:** fly from Kathmandu to Delhi, then take a bus to Rajasthan

**ROUND TRIP:** starts from Rs. 15,500.
AC Bus from Delhi-Jaisalmer-Delhi: Rs 3600
AC Bus from Delhi-Jaisalmer-Delhi: Rs 3600

**Jaisalmer-Delhi:** Rs 3600
AC Bus from Delhi-Jaisalmer-Delhi: Rs 3600

**HOW TO GET THERE:** fly from Kathmandu to Doha and then onwards to Male

**ROUND TRIP:** starts from Rs 135,438

**MALDIVES**

**HOW TO GET THERE:** fly from Kathmandu to Doha and then onwards to Male

**ROUND TRIP:** starts from Rs 135,438

**NEPAL**

Nepal’s highways get a lot of bad press, as roads and the permanently cratered Naubise fields are being harvested 200,000 km across Nepal in the last 15 years. But a new road from Kathmandu to Pokhara via Namo Buddha and Bandipur, that must be open by 2017, is a remarkable city that rises magically from the honey sandstone, hence the city’s golden honey sandstone, hence the city’s designation as the Golden City. No place evokes exotic camel-train trade routes and desert mystery as well as Jaisalmer.

A remarkable city that rises magically from the sand dunes of the Thar Desert. Jaisalmer’s mesmerising ancient fort, built in 1156, is perched on a hill that directly overlooks the city. It houses five palaces, several temples, and exquisite mansions as well as shops and residences. The havelis, the fort, and its enclosed palace are all carved from the same golden honey sandstone, hence the city’s designation as the Golden City. No place evokes exotic camel-train trade routes and desert mystery as well as Jaisalmer.

**Tucked away in the western corner of Rajasthan, Jaisalmer is a remarkable city that rises magically from the sand dunes of the Thar Desert. Jaisalmer’s mesmerising ancient fort, built in 1156, is perched on a hill that directly overlooks the city. It houses five palaces, several temples, and exquisite mansions as well as shops and residences. The havelis, the fort, and its enclosed palace are all carved from the same golden honey sandstone, hence the city’s designation as the Golden City.**

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It’s that time of the year when Nepalis go through their annual moral dilemma: escape the chaos of Kathmandu on an extended holiday or stay on for tika? If you are leaning towards option one, let Nepali Times help you plan your travel. We bring you destinations from the hills to the coastlines. Happy picking and happy dasain!

**Nepal's History**

Sometimes justifiably so. But beyond Kathmandu’s potholed section of the Prithvi Highway, the roads are pretty good. Driving holidays can be surprisingly pleasant, especially in the one, the air is clear, the mountains are pecking out of clouds, and the animat flow has driven more than fears and takes us on a spin on this scenic and historic new highway.

**Nuwakot**

Since the Nausibe road repairs will take another four months or more, there is a way to bypass the jams and also take in the sights at Nuwakot. You leave Kathmandu keeping Nagarjun forest on the left. The road climbs to Kakani where you pass the British Embassy bungalow dating back to the 1860s. Stop at one of the rainbow trout farms for lunch while admiring a breathtaking vista of Ganesh Himal sparkling in the clear post monsoon air.

With stops, you reach the busy Trisuli Bajar in four hours. Cross the bridge, past the hydroproject, and wind up in the old bajar which is a real country market with overhanging windows, gold, silver, tailors shops, pots and pans, and animal parts and chura shops. A 20 min climb above Trisuli is Nuwakot Darbar, perhaps the most impressive and well maintained of the old palace complexes outside the Valley. Built by Prithvi Narayan Shah as his forces laid siege to Kathmandu in the late 18th century, these elegantly proportioned brick buildings and temples sit sublime above the Trisuli River.

Up the hill is The Famous Farmhouse, a great place to break your journey. The Farmhouse and its converted old buildings are family friendly, in residence is a farm life and chatty dogs. The gardens and bougainvillea intertwine, the century, these elegantly proportioned brick buildings and temples sit sublime above the Trisuli River.

**Sightseeing**

For those who prefer a cultural trip, the Naubise road repairs will take another four months. You can also take the very attractive new road following the Trisuli river for an hour and a bit to Galchhi on the Prithvi Highway, well below all those horrid traffic jams. You could easily add in a couple of hours of white water rafting on the river, but try and get timings right for a lunch stop at River Side Springs Resort beside it, there is the secluded Brigand’s Bend across the Trisuli on a footbridge.

**The Famous Farmhouse in Nuwakot and The Old Inn in Bandipur**

**Cambodia**

Cambodia is finally emerging as a go-to destination for holiday makers on a budget. The stunning temples of Angkor are undoubtedly one of the prime attractions of Cambodia. But the chaotic, yet calm capital city Phnom Penh on the banks of the Mekong River is worth a visit too.

**How To Get There:**

Fly from Kathmandu to Bangkok and onwards to Phnom Penh

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**Singapore**

In the Indian culture, topography, climate, and animat festivals can have an effect scuba diving, wind surfing, Maldives, is often a very crowded and noisy place to help you relax and unwind. The gardens and bougainvillea intertwine, the century, these elegantly proportioned brick buildings and temples sit sublime above the Trisuli River.

**How To Get There:**

Direct flights available

**Round Trip:**

Starts from Rs 55,000

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**Nepal’s History**

One of the few countries where Nepalis still get visas on arrival, Singapore is a multicultural city that packs a punch for its small size. Visit Gardens by the Bay, the 101 hectare iconic garden dedicated to horticultural artistry in the midst of the city. Right beside it is the Marina Bay where you can enjoy amazing water and light shows every evening. For an authentic slice of the country’s history, head to Chinatown Heritage Centre where Singapore is the late 19th century and early 20th century has been recreated. Shop till you drop at the high end shopping malls or better, take the very attractive new road following the Trisuli river for an hour and a bit to Galchhi on the Prithvi Highway, well below all those horrid traffic jams. You could easily add in a couple of hours of white water rafting on the river, but try and get timings right for a lunch stop at River Side Springs Resort.

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**How To Get There:**

Fly from Kathmandu to Bangkok and onwards to Phnom Penh

**Round Trip:**

Starts from Rs 83,000

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**Nepal’s History**

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 Occasionally one comes across a deftly written film that when wielded by the correct director’s hand becomes enormously effective, transcending its fairly humble origins. The East is a thriller about eco-terrorism and the fraught moral territory on which it is based, was co-written by Zal Batmanglij and Brit Marling and directed by Batmanglij with Marling starring. The film’s budget was a meager $6.5 million and yet every cent of that money has been used to create a thoroughly believable world where no one is quite what he or she seems.

The East is a film that gets under your skin holding you rapt, asking questions of yourself as well as of the film’s utterly riveting characters. The most compelling aspect of this story is the evolution and the moral dilemma of the main character who is played so very intelligently by Brit Marling. Supported by an excellent cast and based off of a truly horrifying reality, The East is a film that might happen next to these very real people they just saw on screen and came to know in a few short hours.

As Sarah becomes part of the group she slowly starts to awaken to the inherent contradictions that are part and parcel of eco-terrorism. As her newfound team poisons pharmaceutical labs with their own flawed antibiotics, Sarah becomes increasingly caught up in the tenderness with which the group treat each other, particularly Benji (Alexander Skarsgård) and Izzy (Ellen Page), who are the incredibly charismatic leaders of the group.

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While the film ends abruptly and some may feel cheated by this, I do not think that the Batmanglij and Marling duo were copping out when they wrote this ending. Instead, these young, thoughtful and wildly promising new filmmakers are trying to create a slightly different kind of cinema. The kind where their viewers are not force-fed and asked to judge, but rather left to wonder, for themselves, what might happen next to these very real people they just saw on screen and came to know in a few short hours.
ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE, has developed as a destination for adventure seekers and shoppers alike. The city hosts Formula 1 Grand Prix every year during November-December, a testimony of its growing affluence. You could visit the largest mosque in UAE, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque which is a treasure trove of gold and precious stones. The world’s longest bridge and the world’s largest roundabout are other highlights. For the adventure enthusiasts a safari in the desert of Abu Dhabi is worth trying and so is sky diving at the Abu Dhabi Country Club’s Skywalk facility.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 59,000

HONG KONG

Hong Kong is known for its expensive skyline and deep natural harbor. Victoria Peak, the famous vantage point, provides spectacular views of the city. Make a trip to the Historical Museum to better understand the city’s past and cultural heritage. Hong Kong is a sprawling metropolis of 280 islands so hire a speed boat and discover the rugged coastline. Edward Youde Aviary in Hong Kong Park is the best place for bird watching.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 46,000

VIETNAM

Keen to be known for its splendid natural beauty and ancient traditions, Vietnam has transformed itself into a vibrant tourist destination from a war-torn hinterland. Places of interest include the majestic Bay of the Descending Dragons – the Ha Long, Nha Trang the most popular resort town, the Ho An fishing village, the rice terraces of Sa Pa, and the rich and fertile Mekong River delta. Phu Quoc is the largest island in Vietnam, which has reserves of pristine tropical forest and coral reefs.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 67,000

LHASA

Sited at an altitude of 3,409 metres, Lhasa is one of the highest cities in the world. Lhasa literally means ‘place of gods’ and the city’s rich cultural heritage offers plenty to explore. Yamdrok Yumtso Lake is one of three holy lakes in Tibet and is said to be the female guardian of Buddhism in Tibet. Potala Palace is another landmark in Lhasa symbolising Tibetan Buddhism while Jokhang Monastery in Barkhor square has been a key centre of Buddhist pilgrimage for centuries.

ROUND TRIPS start from Rs 67,000

GHAR-E-KABAB

The menu here is not cluttered but still manage to reflect all the varieties that the main building inside Hotel Annapurna in Darbar Marg.

The best of north Indian cuisine. Gazals, classical music, and Bollywood tunes emanate from one end of the hall and quite remarkably, Mohan Sunder who charmed the audience with his Sarod play when the restaurant opened its gates, still performs regularly, his lifelong loss of vision inspiring him to place all his other faculties into his life’s passion. The brainchild of Sahadev Rana, Ghar-e-kabab has moved from the first floor near the entrance of the hotel to the ground floor of the main building, but its influence is prominent. The lighting is still dim, considered romantic by some, and the wood colour paneling on the walls give a feel of the hunting lodges of the Maharajas of yore.

For the mains there was no escaping from butter chicken (Rs 650), barrah kebab (Rs 1,400) and the dal-e-pakore (Rs 450). But we also decided to experiment with our palates and ordered Hyderabadi Nalli Gosht (mutton, Rs 1,400) and mewn (fish) masala marinated, baked in the tandoor as ‘karara’ or crisp rotis freshly out of the tawa or tandoors to the dining tables. Although we had eaten too much but the chef kindly offered a taste of some sweet dishes, including the cooling kafti, which was excellent.

Rainbow diner

How to get there: Ghar-e-kabab is located on the ground floor of the main building inside Hotel Annapurna in Darbar Marg.
The miracle men

In his new book, Second Suns (Random House), author David Oliver Relin traces the extraordinary journey of Sanduk Ruit (pic, left), the eye doctor from the remote mountains of Olangchungola village in Taplejung district, who pioneered modern cataract surgery in the country and made eye care accessible to ordinary citizens. Across the 432 pages, readers also learn about American ophthalmologist Geoff Tabin (pic, right) who works alongside Ruit in performing cataract operations particularly well. In villages where hundreds of patients are waiting for surgery, speed is of essence.

An important study (referenced in the book) in the American Journal of Ophthalmology clearly demonstrated that one of the world’s best and fastest eye surgeons, David Chang from the US, took nearly twice as long to operate on each patient as Ruit did. The study also revealed that 91 per cent of Ruit’s cataract patients regained normal vision after a day of surgery compared to Chang’s 78 per cent. This is an essential difference for people who have to walk back home for hours over difficult terrain soon after the operation. At six months, 98 per cent of both Chang and Ruit’s patients had excellent or good eyesight. In terms of quality, the surgeries Ruit performs in monasteries, schools, and police posts are comparable to those carried out in well-equipped state-of-the-art hospitals in the US.

There is however a pervading sense of anxiety throughout Second Suns. David Relin, who also co-authored the best-seller Three Cups of Tea with Greg Mortenson, commits suicide in 2012 after it was revealed that Mortenson had either fabricated or excessively embellished many events in the book. Contrary to Three Cups, this heart-warming tale about Ruit and Tabin stays true to these miracle men’s lives and mission.
The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting,’ novelist Milan Kundera wrote. Indeed, those who wield power often try to efface the imprints of their despicable past, recreating on the slate of a cleansed public memory an endearing image of themselves. Yet, their darkled past returns to haunt them because of individuals who want to hold the powerful accountable for their misdeeds. Occasionally, though, it is also because of the self-serving compulsions of their comrades-in-arm with whom they shared a common past.

In many countries we have to remind ourselves not to forget. In India last week, Deputy Inspector General of Police DG Vanzara (pic, above) released a resignation letter in which he fulminated against Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Vanzara, once Modi’s trusted cop, was arrested and now faces trial for killing people in allegedly fake encounters in the months following the 2002 riots in Gujarat. Vanzara’s missile-like missive establishes a connection between the riots and encounters alleged to be fake, since the CBI investigators claim that he and other officers were engaged in fake encounters, then those who formulated anti-terrorism policy should also be arrested.

It’s a logic which should have an inherent appeal for, say, former minister Maya Kodani, who has been condemned to spend her life in prison for her role in the 2002 riots but the person who benefitted most from it is now being projected as a prime ministerial candidate. You can’t but wonder through whom the past might decide to whisper its secrets next. Obviously, Vanzara’s intercession on behalf of memory wasn’t for upholding the principle of justice, but to protect himself. For Modi, the past has been squeezed of all its benefits, he wants to reinvent a new persona. For Vanzara, this could mean years of languishing in prison. He must, therefore, not let Modi or the public forget the riots and encounters, the memory of which civil society activists have anyway kept alive.

The summons a United States federal court issued last week to Congress President Sonia Gandhi for allegedly shielding those who triggered the 1984 riots in Delhi was another reminder of the power of memory. The memory of 1984 returned because of a law suit filed by the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) demanding compensatory and punitive damages from Sonia for shielding those accused of triggering the 1984 pogroms. You’d probably think it is an act aimed to harass Sonia. But ask lawyer HS Phoolka, who has been tirelessly working to secure justice for the 1984 victims and he has a different take. For instance, an FIR was registered against Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in 1987 for his involvement in the murder of four Sikhs. After five years of investigation, Delhi’s Nangloi police station prepared a chargesheet in April 1992, saying that there was enough evidence to try Kumar. Usually, after a chargesheet is filed a trial happens within three weeks. But 22 years later, the chargesheet against Kumar hasn’t been filed. Again, journalist Sanjay Suri filed an affidavit with the Mishra Commission, which probed the 1984 riots, saying he had seen Kamal Nath lead a mob which burnt down a Sikh temple and set two Sikhs ablaze. Not only is there no FIR, the Congress has rewarded Kamal Nath with important cabinet posts. Until justice is done and the ghosts of the past buried, India together with other countries in the region including Nepal, will be doomed to witness the struggle of memory against forgetting. 

ashrafajaz3@gmail.com
When the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) arrested employees from the Department of Immigration, Airport Customs, and the Department of Foreign Labour last month, many felt the action was long overdue at an airport notorious for corruption and victimisation of migrant workers.

It has been two years since Chief Secretary Leela Mani Paudyal, who was the secretary at the PM’s office at that time, submitted a report to the Baburam Bhattarai government detailing the bribery, harassment, and victimisation at Kathmandu airport. The report estimated then that the daily kickbacks and payoffs totalled Rs 2 million.

The CIAA says it is acting on complaints by victims and media reports of recruitment agencies being in cahoots with immigration personnel to extort departing and arriving Nepali overseas contract workers. The agency says 16 officials are under investigation and five others have been charged. “There is enough proof, testimonies, and audio-visual material to prosecute those accused,” says CIAA spokesperson Shreedhar Sapkota.

The airport earned notoriety last year when a young Nepali woman returning from Saudi Arabia was detained for having a false passport, extorted by immigration officials, and raped by a policeman. When the case exploded in the media, it showed just how blatant and widespread the victimisation of vulnerable Nepalis by fellow Nepalis was. Of the accused in that case the rapist and an immigration official are in jail and two are on bail pending trial (see box).

Sutra Gurung of Paurakhi, an organisation that helps women returnees rehabilitate, says her volunteers have seen customs officials sell departure cards for up to Rs 1,000. “When these women come back from the Gulf, they are mentally ill, some are pregnant, and some come back with children. Above all, they come back nearly broke and airport officials use this vulnerability to corner them,” says Gurung.

Many other Nepalis who were given fake documents by recruiters when they left the country get caught on return and are vulnerable and targeted for extortion and abuse by predator officials at the airport and at the immigration detention facility in Kalikasthan. Even if they escape the clutches of airport officials, Nepali workers, especially women, are often abused by their foreign employers. A 37-year-old woman from Jhapa was tricked into boarding the plane to Saudi Arabia via India with a fake passport. In a town called Hayal in Saudi Arabia, her employer beat her, paid her less than her contract, and locked her up. The woman has now returned.

Another 24-year-old from Surkhet went to Saudi Arabia four years ago and came home twice without facing any hassle at Kathmandu airport. On her third time back last month, the rules were stricter and she was detained because her passport had been forged by her agent. She has been in detention in Kalikasthan for the past three weeks. About 50 women live with her in a small room that is so cramped that detainees can’t even lie down properly. Most are in custody for no fault of their own, but for being duped by agents who have given them forged passports. The women are kept for 25 days, fined, and released, but the manpower agencies that gave them the documents are never punished.

Nepalis working in Saudi Arabia were given general amnesty last month and most of them are returning home. Also last month, the Malaysian authorities cracked down on illegal migrant workers and about 500 of the estimated 60,000 illegals in Malaysia will be returning to Nepal. “If the officers arrested by the CIAA spill the beans about their dealings with manpower agents none of us will be spared,” admitted one recruiter on condition of anonymity, explaining that it is the immigration and labour officials themselves who want to be paid off to issue permits to

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

Arresting corrupt officials at immigration and airport isn’t going to solve the problem unless the system is thoroughly cleansed.
boundaries and working hand
security employees from crossing
“It doesn’t stop customs and
is itself weak,” admits Gurung.
employment sector is regulated
structure in which the foreign
problems are deep rooted. “The
Advisory Taskforce, says the
of the Foreign Employment

in hand with whoever offers the
largest bribe.”
Gurung says brokers outside the system have inside knowledge of official information and use civil servants as well as security personnel to obtain files for themselves. “If the CIAA stops investigation, activity will increase again,” says Gurung.

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Knocked out

BBC Nepal Service, 9 September

After losing 1-0 to Afghanistan at the semi finals of the South Asian Football Federation Championship 2013, the Nepali national team drew widespread flak for failing to find the goalpost. We caught up with coach Krishna Thapa to get his reaction.

BBC: Why did Nepal fall short once again despite improved performance, rising confidence, and immense support from the home crowd?

Krishna Thapa: Maybe it was just bad luck. Our defence was from the home crowd? Our overall performance has improved. Of the four matches, I think we played best against Bangladesh. The Pakistan match was memorable because of the context and the manner in which we equalised.

How do you rate Nepal's overall performance?

Overall, do you feel that Nepal made a good game of it?

Do you feel that Nepal made a good game of it?

We dominated them in the second half. Our tempo increased, we made good moves through the midfield. It was a bad day, nothing worked for us.

We made good link-up plays, but it wasn't to be. Overall, do you feel that Nepal made a good game of it?

Did Afghanistan alter their game plan after the early goal?

Not really. They had physical advantage in midfield where they made good link-up plays, but not in the danger zones. After scoring so early in the presence of 20,000 Nepali fans, their confidence got an immense boost.

Which goal did you feel was the most memorable?

Football 50.2%, Cricket 27.4%, Volleyball 11.7%, Badminton 3.6%, Martial Arts 2.8%, Basketball 1.8%.

How do you rate Nepal's overall performance?

What could the government do to put Nepal on the global sporting map?

Overall performance has improved. Of the four matches, I think we played best against Bangladesh. The Pakistan match was memorable because of the context and the manner in which we equalised.

Click here to listen to the original Nepali podcast.

18 FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Nepali TWEETS

Guns n elections

Nawaraj Mainali in Naya Patrika, 12 September

As the election date draws closer, the trade of small arms is on the rise and the Home Ministry is preparing to release a security plan within the next few days. Nepal Police, Armed Police, and the National Investigation Department all admit in the report that the proliferation of small arms poses a great threat to free and fair elections.

Our porous border with India makes it easier to smuggle firearms. Police say that party members and criminal gangs with political protection possess large amounts of illegal guns. Police say that party members and criminal gangs with political protection possess large amounts of illegal guns. Police say that party members and criminal gangs with political protection possess large amounts of illegal guns.

The third group hires drivers as mules to bring in the guns to Kathmandu and other areas. They hide the arms in sacks of rice, sugar, and cement which come in hundreds per truck into the Valley, making it impossible for police to manually check each bag.

There are 40 AFP border outposts and numerous checkpoints along the border, but they are severely understaffed and can't cover the 1,000 km border.

Ball: All party meet

We can shift the election date to 30 November if the OPM-M decision to participate. Everyone should know the longer we postpone, the more it will disrupt progress made for the polls.

Bijaya Kumar Gachhadhar, Naya Patrika, 12 September
“Dedicated my to the party, the people, and change”

Interview with UCPN (M) leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha
Himal Khabarpatrika, 8 September

Himal Khabarpatrika: It is said that Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal make all the decisions within the party and they announce their verdict to others. How satisfied are you with the decision making process?

Narayan Kaji Shrestha: Not everything you read in newspapers is true. When we have discussions, I put forth my views and am equally involved in deliberations as well as implementation of official policies. Yes it’s true that sometimes the points I and others raise might not get much attention. But the party is also holding a meeting on nationalism for the first time. So why do we keep hearing about your dissatisfaction with party procedures?

More than the party, I am worried about Nepal’s messy politics. Nepal has turned into an old age home for neo-colonialism because our internal decision making capability is very weak. It took the sacrifice of 17,000 lives for the revolution to be successful, now we are squandering it through dirty politics.

Bhattarai resigned because he did not want to share the post of vice-chairman with you. You were upset over the removal of elected party officials right?

I am not a person who gets upset over post and status. I have dedicated my life to the party, the people, and change. But disbanding elected party officials within six months of the general convention is not good. While trying to make changes to the party’s organisational structure, we made mistakes and there were weaknesses. The manner in which Baburam resigned from his vice-chairman post was wrong, but we had to resolve the issue then and there. Although we all agreed that he should be made ‘senior leader’. Chairman Dahal thought it was not suitable to create a new post at that time.

After Baburam refused to return to being vice-chairman, I talked with Post Bahadur Bogati and both of us decided to resign. Only Baburam knows what is going on in his head. But I am certain he did not leave his post because he did not want to share it with me. Even now we are together in the central committee.

How is your relation with Bhattarai?
When you are working together it is natural to have disagreements over procedures and methodologies.

What about the rift between you and Dahal?
I still consider Dahal a revolutionary leader and have no problems working under him. It’s not a big deal to have differing opinions. I have been critical of his past decisions many times. Even when we were underground, I had voiced my discontent with Prachanda-path.

Why did the party split?
The party broke apart because there were major disagreements about how to conclude the peace process and how to take the constitution writing process ahead.

But now the UCPN (M) is under a one-man leadership?
That is due to circumstances and not a long-term consequence. We shall settle those organisational issues at the national convention after elections.

What is your definition of identity?
We should not look at identity in terms of ethnicity or caste. Federalism must address the identities of marginalised and minority communities who have remained outside the purview of the national mainstream so far. But we also need to maintain a balance between identity and capacity.

How should war-era cases be handled?
We should move forward with a broad understanding. All issues should be resolved according to the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. That is why we need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as soon as possible.

Then why are those who have been judged guilty by the court being recommended as election candidates?
I don’t believe the court is god. In the case you are referring to, the court failed to follow due procedure. But we will accept its decision.

Can elections take place on 19 November? Rest assured, elections will happen on time.

Will Mohan Baidya’s party take part in polls?
We can’t say for sure at the moment, but there are positive indications from the party. They haven’t completely reversed the decision they made in Pokhara to boycott elections though.

Any prospects of unification?
Currently there have been no concrete steps to bring the two parties together. Unification is not possible until we iron out political and ideological differences.
Kick ass, or kiss ass?

The reason for all this lingering uncertainty about November elections is that no one in the governmet seems to be sure what to do with the Dash Baddies: whether to kick ass, or kiss ass. So they are doing both. The confusion is reciprocal because a politburo meeting of the Dashos at the Baidya Bah base camp the other day broke into a bout of all-out name-calling as everyone tried to outdo each other to have a more radical stance to put pressure on the Higher Up Mechanics. Some warned that if the Cash YCL went ahead with its “1 booth, 200 youth” threat, the Dash would retaliate with “1 booth, 1 tooth.”

In the end, the conclusion was that the party should reunite to face elections, but since there isn’t enough time to get things organised for November it was decided to rattle sabres and keep making a big show of imparting military training to youngsters at the edge of the jungles to persuade the political parties to postpone polls pronto. PKD, MKN, SBD are all tempted, but a higher-up authoritarian is saying, “November, or bust.”

A joke doing the rounds is that there is another reason the Hyphen Mau are called ‘Dash’: because they keep dashing off to China from time to time. But, in all seriousness, it does look like the Land of the Dead Mao wants Dash to unite with Cash and go for elections, while the Land of the Live Mao wants them divided at polls.

So, moving right along to the next point on our agenda this week, we shall present a brief update about the state of our one and only international airport. The runway has stopped cracking up, so the heavies are landing and taking off as usual. The rhinos that had occupied the departure area demanding that they be allowed to leave the country to work in the US have called off their sit-in. But ever since unfortunately named CIAA started rounding up officials from the Department of Irritation for taking bribes from migrant workers, the immigration-wallahs have been on go-slow allowing huge queues that snake out of the arrival hall almost to the tarmac. Ditto for departure. Things can still be speeded up, of course, for a fee.

However, the latest crisis at the airport is the case of the vanishing valise. A line at the misplaced baggage counter recently turned out to be composed of passengers lining up to report items stolen from their checked-in luggage. There are brigands on the loose who intercept luggage between the time it leaves plane’s cargo hold and the time it gets to the carousel, open locks, and help themselves to the content. Visitors are thus acclimatised on arrival to all the excitement that Nepal has to offer.

Once prospective candidates from the same party start beating each other up over tickets, you know that elections are around the corner. It’s not just the Kangresis that have two blocs, the Koirala family itself now has at least five factions. SuziQ, determined to carry on her father’s grand tradition, wanted the Biratnagar ticket and when she didn’t get it, gheraoed her own party’s office until Uncle Bhusi banished her to Kalikot, while he himself is contesting in multiple constituencies. This is a time-honoured tradition in Nepal where netas who only stand from one place aren’t taken that seriously. Awesum is standing from Kathmandu and Janakpur, but has abandoned Rolpa because no Cash can even enter the Dash stronghold anymore. Even if the boxes lose in all the places they contest, however, there is still hope and this is exemplified by Makunay who lost in both constituencies and still went on to be prime minister.

The Ass’ vote for Nepal’s Alfa Male goes to Loktantra Man, who has deployed the full weight of the CIAA to go after people who have crossed him in the past. We don’t hear of any Cash Baddie paying any income tax on Rs 4 billion that vanished from the cantonment budget, but the CIAA and their buddies from Revenue are going for small fries with a fine tooth comb. Overzealous CIAA operatives raided the 90th birthday party of kangresikatering king, BL Sharma, and booked him for inviting more than 50 guests.

Last Saturday’s Tij Un-Bunned was organised by the Cash Baddies’ Newa State Council which takes its orders directly from BRB and First Lady Yummy. But guess what the surnames of the office bearers of the Newar Autnomous Region are: Poudel and Dahal.

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Times
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NATURAL COLOURS: A horseman taking part in Mustang’s Yartung festival is framed by a rainbow in Khinkbar last week.