While the rest of Nepal suffered massive landslides and floods this month, in the trans-Himalayan rain shadow the country’s largest and most remote district remained in splendid isolation. Dolpa’s jewel is Phoksundo (above) a lapis lazuli-coloured lake. Nepal’s deepest and second-biggest. The district is the last two among Nepal’s 75 that doesn’t yet have a road connection. Noted conservationist Hum Gurung travelled to Shey Phoksundo National Park recently to study the region’s spiritual tradition of protecting nature, and examine how the sanctuary may be affected by a new road that will connect Dolpa to the rest of Nepal.

Mist-ical Dolpa

The World Wildlife Fund appoints Miss Nepal Subin Limbu as its Young Conservation Ambassador.

MISSING ANOTHER DEADLINE

The UCPN(M) threatens to delay the constitution if it is not allowed to lead a parallel government

THE DEADLINE

BY DAMAKANT JAYSHI

PAGE 4

WATCHING THE WATCHDOG

The CIAA’s recent sting operations go after small fry

LEGALISE

BY BINITA DAHAL

PAGE 7

Go to Germany with Turkish Airlines. Discover harmony in diversity

buzz MISS GREEN

The World Wildlife Fund appoints Miss Nepal Subin Limbu as its Young Conservation Ambassador.
Nepal is woefully unprepared for calamities which are made even more deadly because of bad planning and poor response.

lack of hazard mapping, the non-enforcement of zoning and building codes.

Let’s start calling them ‘unnatural disasters’ because most of the damage is preventable. The Kosi embankment did not breach by itself in 2008, quarrying of the boulders on the levee had weakened it. This was repeated on the Kamala this month. The Siraha bridge did not just collapse, it was caused by illegal sand-mining upstream. The highest death toll in the mid-west on the night of 12 August was among people recently displaced by deforestation and mining of river beds along the Seti, Trisuli, Narayani and the Tarai rivers increases water velocity, making even a normal river run amok.

However, there are extreme weather events or catastrophic once-in-a-lifetime floods that happen without warning, but are not all that unexpected. The last three issues of this paper have flood stories on page 1 (below).

In 2008, the government, after much prodding from a consortium of donors, set up a Central Disaster Relief Committee under the Home Ministry which drew up a ‘conceptual framework’ for response management. The focus has been to decentralise disaster preparedness and relief to the district level. The aftermath of the Bhote Kosi landslide showed that decentralised response does work well. The Sindhupalchok district administration organised rescue, relief and rehabilitation of survivors. First response is always by local communities, and the lesson learnt from the landslide was to further strengthen local capacity to deal with calamity. The Nepal Army acted promptly, but by being slow to accept an offer of help from Chinese engineers with experience in unblocking a river after the Yunnan earthquake on 3 August, may have unnecessarily prolonged the crisis.

In the mid-west showed that central disaster management and coordination is still woefully inadequate. Three weeks later, relief hasn’t reached many villages, as Naresh Newar’s report on page 19 proves.

A disproportionate number of the dead and displaced in both disasters were women and children. This is a result of male outmigration, but it carries a valuable lesson for future disaster planning: that the most vulnerable segment of our society will be even more vulnerable in future disasters.

Editorial

We call them ‘natural disasters’: earthquakes, floods, landslides. Yet, earthquakes don’t kill people, unsafe buildings do. Our ancestors instinctively knew not to live along river banks, settlements were located on high ground. People exposed to seismic and tsunami risk, like Japan, have detailed prevention and rescue plans in place. Most disasters may be natural, but the casualties are largely manmade.

In 2010, two earthquakes struck the Americas. The one in Haiti killed more than 100,000 people, it was a much greater earthquake in Chile a few months later killed less than 600 people. The Chileans were better prepared, had stricter building codes and had trained rescue teams. Nepal has Chile-like earthquakes and Haiti-like preparedness and rescue planning.

The Himalayan arc is the planet’s highest and youngest mountain range, and it is still rising. The bedrock is on the move with the top soil clinking precariously to steep slopes. The mountains act as a rain barrier, too, giving the area a lot of rain. The mountain range, and it is still rising. The bedrock is on the move with the top soil clinking precariously to steep slopes. The mountains act as a rain barrier, too, giving the area a lot of rain. However, it is also very unstable being young. In this naturally unstable terrain is situated Sikkim, more than 600 people. The Chileans were better prepared, had stricter building codes and had trained rescue teams. Nepal has Chile-like earthquakes and Haiti-like preparedness and rescue planning.

The Himalayan foot hills some of the heaviest precipitation rates in the world. In this naturally unstable terrain is situated the most densely populated country in the world. Add to this a mix of a prolonged drought, as a rain barrier, too, giving the area a lot of rain. The mountains act as a rain barrier, too, giving the area a lot of rain. However, it is also very unstable being young. In this naturally unstable terrain is situated Sikkim, more than 600 people. The Chileans were better prepared, had stricter building codes and had trained rescue teams. Nepal has Chile-like earthquakes and Haiti-like preparedness and rescue planning.

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Instead of federalism

Last week I argued against federalism ('Federalism for the sake of it', #721) suggesting that it was a bad response to legitimate concerns (particularly among those who feel that the existing system gives too much power to what is already a dominant group in the political system) to ensure that the new Nepal had a system of democracy that accepted the will of the majority while defending and indeed promoting the interests of minority groups.

GUEST COLUMN
David Seddon

I am a democrat, and a socialist, and recognise those feelings of marginalisation and lack of real ‘voice’ among disadvantaged groups. The problem with federalism is that it will not give voice, let alone power, to the truly disadvantaged and marginalised, but only to those who claim to speak in their name and who are among the relatively better off, better educated and least disadvantaged and marginalised of the groups whom they claim to represent.

It is not too late to reconsider the positive alternatives to federalism

In the name of caste and ethnic marginalisation, the rich and powerful will claim the right to a state of ‘their’ own. There will be no voice, let alone power, for women, dalits, religious minorities, the disabled and other social groups, nor even for the poor and disadvantaged among the Janjati and the Madhesis, in the new federal states – just more relatively well-off men from privileged backgrounds gaining more power and wealth from their new positions.

An alternative might be to consider in more detail the proposal, which it seems Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the UCPN(M) now favours, for proportional representation. This could be the sole system of political representation, offering an alternative to the first-past-the-post system, or else it could be combined with first-past-the-post, as it was in the elections to the singularly broad and representative first Constituent Assembly.

This would favour smaller parties and reduce the dismal dominance of the three main parties, whose leaders at present seem to feel they can ignore the other parties, dissent from public opinion, and make policy virtually on their own terms.

Another option is to look to the districts (elected DDCs) to provide the basis for an elected second house, if such is considered of value. If each District Council (whose members would be themselves democratically elected to the DDC) elected a representative to a national House of Representatives, they might – or might not (that would be their prerogative as representatives rather than mandated delegates) – decide to form regional blocs to argue the case for their region.

They may feel impelled to do this according to whether they come from the hills or from the Terai, whether they come from the Far-West, the Mid-West or the East, or according to any other of a number of possible cross-cutting alliances and associations. They may form blocs or alliances according to the predominant caste or ethnic group in their district, but they may unite on entirely different bases altogether. This, however, would give an additional democratic set of voices, from the local DDCs to add to the voices in the National Assembly.

If it is sincerely felt that Nepal needs a new mechanism to recognise the distinctive characteristics of particular regions, there are already five so-called ‘development regions’, on the basis of which comparisons are often made: the Far-West, Mid-West, the West, the Centre, and the East. In the 1970s and 1980s these were regarded as the basis for development, ideally with major roads linking the mountains, hills and Terai in each and highways linking them all from west to east.

They could again be recognised as a valid framework, not be federalisation but for a coherent unified national effort to reduce the inequalities between them. They could also be linked in a renewed and comprehensive effort to promote both development and national unity, while at the same time, separately recognising the diversity of Nepal’s economy and society.

The very urgent need to promote positive or affirmative action to improve the situation of people living in disadvantaged regions, as well as those disadvantaged by class, gender, caste or ethnicity, religion or other cultural features, age and/or disability could also be addressed.

There are so many alternatives to consider as ways to transform the status quo and give those who are disadvantaged and marginalised a voice and real power. Why waste time on ‘federalism’, whose real advantages have never been explained by their advocates and which has become a ‘sacred cow’ – if the use of this term is not too offensive – in public discourse, simply because it was ‘adopted’ with virtually no prior or subsequent discussion at the first Constituent Assembly in 2008?

It is not too late to reconsider the positive alternatives to federalism.

David Seddon is author of Nepal in Crisis: Growth and Stagnation in the Periphery and The Struggle for Basic Needs in Nepal, Nepal - A State of Poverty, and co-author of The People’s War.

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Watching the watchdog

In recent months, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has started taking its transparency watchdog role seriously, and gone on a delusion spree. Operatives have carried out sting operations and caught officials in flagrante as they accepted bribes. Among those caught red-handed recently have been the Joint Secretary of the Higher Secondary Education Board, officials of National Investigation Authority, the vice chancellor of Mid-Western University and 14 other officials who are now in custody while investigations are underway.

With the campaign of arrests, suspensions and filing corruption charges in the Special Court, CIAA has not been active since the appointment of Chief Commissioner Lok Man Singh Karki last year. When he was recommended for CIAA chief, many legal eagles and civil society activists had criticized the decision of the Chief Justice-led Interim Election Government to appoint him.

They compared the appointment to getting a fox to guard the chicken coop because of Karki’s alleged involvement in graft for which he was investigated by the very agency he was nominated to head. He was also faulted for his role in the crackdown on pro-democracy protestors in April 2006 under the Gyanendra regime. Despite the opposition, Karki’s appointment was endorsed last year by President Ram Baran Yadav for a tenure of six years.

Karki hit the ground running, investigating corruption and directing government agencies to expedite pending appointments. However, the CIAA has also been criticised for being arbitrary, ad hoc, restricted to catching only the small fish, or reeking of political vendetta.

The high profile arrests have also sparked civil servants, who are now reluctant to take major decisions for fear of being scapegoated. The tendency to detain alleged culprits under the guise of the media, and the conviction of guilt until proven innocent has negatively impacted governance and service delivery by government agencies.

The legal procedures being followed are also questionable: when the CIAA files a case against anyone in the Special Court, the accused are immediately suspended from their jobs. This results in defamation of officials, some of whom may have been arrested without evidence, who are innocent, or who are ultimately acquitted by the court. In most cases, the damage is already done, because of the trial by media.

The CIAA has repeatedly admitted that it lacks the personnel to investigate all petitions that are filed. Many who are arrested haven’t yet had a case filed against them. Such delays are inexcusable, especially if the accused may actually be innocent or framed. The CIAA must either file cases and begin prosecution in the courts, or it shouldn’t arrest people: after all, justice delayed is justice denied.

Transparency International, the global corruption watchdog, says political parties top the list of the corrupt among a dozen institutions in Nepal. The bureaucracy, police, legislature/parliament, the judiciary, the private sector, military, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, medical and health services, are all belched politicians on a corruption filled pan of shame.

An even more serious charge against the CIAA is that it is only going after selected small fry, while the big fish in the Transparency International list of the worst culprits are immune to prosecution. None of the top political leaders are being investigated, and the former politicians who have been arrested and sentenced tend to be the small fry. The NC or Madhesi parties have had the CIAA open to charges of waging a political witch-hunt.

As long as top political leaders, senior bureaucrats, Nepal Police, judiciary and Nepal Army personnel are out of bounds, the CIAA’s attempts to clean up Nepal’s governance system will lack credibility.

Missing another deadline

Pushpa Kamal Dahal is threatening to delay the constitution if he is not allowed to head a parallel government.

Despite the CIAA’s recent sting operations, the agency is charged with going after small fry or waging political witch-hunts.

Five months to go. That’s the self-imposed deadline the parties have set this week to deliver the new constitution. There are other sub-deadlines before 22 January 2013. The parties have to reach an agreement on the disagreements by the first week of September, and the first draft of the statute is to be readied by mid-October to get the people’s feedback.

The political parties were serial violators of the earlier timetable before the last Constituent Assembly (CA). By the looks of it, CA2 is on a similar trajectory. Except for settling some minor issues, the Assembly is yet to find a breakthrough on issues that ultimately led to the failure of the last one: state restructuring, system of governance, judiciary and electoral system.

The biggest hurdle was, and still is, state restructuring aka federalism. The parties have stuck to their positions. The NC and the UML want no more than five or seven provinces at the most, the UCPN (Maoist) want to go for double that number. The Madhes-based parties are fighting for a single east-to-west Madhes Pradeshi in the Tarai, but may settle for at the most, two.

Baburam Bhattarai, who heads the Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee – the all-important body in the second assembly – has now suggested going back to the 15 May, 2012 agreement between the NC, the UML, the UCPN (M) and the former Madhesi Marda. That agreement had proposed 11 multi-identity states, including five in the Tarai and left the naming of the provinces to state legislatures. It had also proposed a mixed model of governance directly elected president and a House-elected prime minister as well as a mixed electoral system.

Bhattarai would like to forget that it was he, as prime minister, and his party with its Madhesi coalition partner, who opposed that very same proposal. Twelve days later, the CA was dissolved by Bhattarai after rejecting any single alternative proposed by the NC and the UML. That ensured he continued to be the prime minister and the prospect of Mohan Baidya-led CPN-Maoist supporting an NC-UML no-confidence motion against him never materialised.

Had that agreement been honoured, we would have had a constitution by now and a jumbo 11-state federal republic.

Why this change of heart? Bhattarai, as is his wont, does not care to explain. His running feud with party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, may have forced him to now say that he is in favour of a deal that he had so vehemently opposed and killed. Dahal, out of power, and likely to torpedo any deal unless he has a breakthrough, would gladly serve as a parallel government, and continue where it left off during the tenure of the unelected technocratic government last year. Dahal has threatened to bring the House to a standstill if the NC and UML don’t agree. And if that happens, we can kiss a timely constitution goodbye.

Dahal and Bhattarai conveniently ignore the fact that the November 2013 election was actually a referendum on federalism. Those supporting multiple states, states carved on the basis of ethnicity, and a single Madhes province were routed in the polls. Top UCMP (M), the Madhes-based and Janjati parties lost, or barely scraped through. Stunned by the sheer scale of the defeat, sympathetic analysts split hairs about “public opinion” and “mandate”.

What next? Some bruised eggs need to be managed, including those of Madhesi-based party leaders, else they have the capacity to derail any progress. But there is a difference between appeasement and meaningful accommodation.

The Constitution’s validity is guaranteed if there is consensus over its contents or at least major acceptability. The reality is that the final draft will be a compromise that will leave everyone dissatisfied.

Let the Constituent Assembly do its work without any diktat from outside. It has enough in-built mechanisms to find compromises and consensus, and if they can’t find any, follow the Interim Constitution.
Moving with the eyeballs

As Indian readers migrate to digital platforms, the advertising industry struggles to adjust

Advertising is still about ideas, the challenge is to improve the quality of our ideas.

Colvyn Harris, CEO of J W Thomson South Asia

Nepal, talked about the changing landscape in advertising that will affect journalism: paid stories, native advertising, and treaties.

With treaties, the media gets free shares in a startup and pays back in planted stories in the paper, masquerading as news. Harris explains how it works: “It is a barter, the currency is paper, goods and services are exchanged.” The lines between news and advertising gets blurred, and newspapers have to learn to do this without hurting their credibility, he adds.

The fundamental principles of advertising, however, has not changed, Harris says: “It is still about ideas, the challenge is to improve the quality of our ideas.”

There is still growth in traditional media advertising by telecom, two-wheeler, FMCG or real estate clients, but brand recall is falling. Harris often gives a test in which he asks clients to tell him what was the front page ad in that morning’s Times of India. Most can’t.

“In the old ad of advertising there is overkill and wastage,” he says, “the new way is to seamlessly be a part of the public’s conversation without interrupting them.”

Which is why JWT has bought into digital companies which specialise in connecting clients directly with customers through social media.

Increasing numbers of Nepali companies are now advertising through Facebook and Google, and this trend is expected to pick up. However, for Nepal a lot will depend on investment picking up.

Kunda Dixit
A backlash against expensive and invasive healthcare sends patients to the traditional ayurvedic healers of Kathmandu

SONIA AWALE

Maya Thapa had been suffering stomach pains for five years. The 63-year-old roamed between private clinics and hospitals in Patan, and spent a fortune on prescriptions. When the pain persisted, she visited her friendly neighbourhood baidya who gave her a dark brown powder wrapped in paper. Now, after two doses, her stomach pain is gone.

With the rapid spread of hospitals and modern medicine in Nepal over the past 50 years, one would have thought that baidyas would have become extinct. Yet, these traditional healers who diagnose and treat common ailments like gout, ulcers, jaundice or asthma with herb-based potions are more popular than ever.

"Allopathic treatment is expensive, and it has side effects which is why there has been no decline in the number of patients who come here," says Yogendra Raj Baidiya, 51, who comes from a long line of traditional healers and runs the Siddhi Ayurveda Ausadhalaya in Sankhamul. Ratna Shri Shrestha concurs. She helps her husband, Birendra, whose father and grandfather were all baidyas. “Most of our patients used to be the elderly. But now we also see younger people coming to consult us,” says Ratna Shri.

Besides this, patients with jaundice and other diseases for which modern medicine has no real cure, also come to ayurvedic clinics for traditional herbal formulas. A baidya treatment is slower, but the herbs work in harmony with the body, detoxifying it and restoring the immune system and the patient’s own healing mechanism. “There is a growing backlash against modern medicine in the cities,” says Rishi Raj Regmi at the state-run Singha Darbar Baidyakhana, whose interior has a pungent-sweet aroma from a multitude of herbs stacked on wooden shelves. The Baidyakhana had been steadily losing its relevance, but in the past decade has become a busy place again.

Rup Krishna Shrestha, 54, was one of the first to start a pharmacy solely for ayurvedic medicines in Patan. He owns the Dekha Herbal Factory, stocks herbs, grinds and mixes his own medications. In most baidya families the younger generation has not completely abandoned the medical profession. Rup Krishna’s daughter, for example, is a dentist. Yogendra Raj Bajracharya is 51, and his family has balanced modern and traditional: his older son is doing an MBBS while his younger son is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in ayurvedic medicine.

In old days, baidyas were also astrologers and shamans. Dip Bharat Bajracharya’s grandfather was the legendary Blindro Guruji of Patan, and at 18 is carrying on the grand tradition of his ancestors along with four other brothers, who are all baidyas.

According to the Nepal Ayurveda Council, the most respected is Nipra Kumari Shakyar, who is unmarried at 77 and is continuing her ancestral profession of mixing ayurvedic potions that her family has been doing for at least five generations. Shakyar is busier than ever, as demand grows.

The Singha Darbar Baidyakhana announces tenders every year for the supply of rare material such as asuro, salapatti, harro bau-aal, jatamansi, sarangadhra, charifte, ashtagandha, peau, tuli, neem, bark of pomegranate, sukumel, etc. The Nepal Himalaya is a treasure house of medicinal plants used in both ayurvedic and Tibetan medicine, and Rup Krishna at the centre believes that cultivating some of these herbs instead of harvesting them from the wild would be more sustainable, and also provide livelihoods to more people.

Piyush Bajracharya, 62, says the tradition of ayurvedic medicine is inseparably linked to Hindu and Buddhist practices that have co-evolved in Kathmandu Valley. Baidyas mainly come from the Shakya, Baidya and Bajracharya families, and combine Hindu Ayurveda knowledge with Buddha’s teachings about holistic mind-body healing.

Ayurvedic remedies seem to work best with diseases like jaundice and stomach ailments, and it is not the old who trust traditional treatment. Twenty-nine-year-old Madan Dangol was taking modern medicine for his ailment, but his condition never improved.

He says: “I went to all the hospitals but never got better. Everyone told me to visit the baidya, and I have been coming here for two months. I am feeling much better now, and am going to continue this treatment.”

THE HEALING TOUCH: Nipra Kumari Shakyar (above, left) is one of four female baidyas and her family have been ayurvedic healers for five generations. At 77, she is busier than ever. Rup Krishna Shrestha (above, right) has his own ayurvedic pharmacy in Patan. His daughter is a dentist.

The return of the baidyas
It's only a month to go for Dasain, believe it or not, and the monsoon is just getting started. The trend this past decade is that the monsoon is starting late and ending late, and this being an El Nino year meteorologists expect more localised extreme rainfall events in the coming month. The soil is saturated, so heavy rainfall will trigger landslides. Expect the night thunderstorms with rain to continue into the weekend, with the sky clearing up in the daytime.

KATHMANDU

PICS: BIKRAM RAI

WHILE many would expect a Miss Nepal to be a celebrity too swamped with appointments to sit down for a long conversation and too diplomatic to give candid responses, Miss Nepal 2014 Subin Limbu turned out to be relaxed, frank and open.

The 23-year old native of Dharan is articulate, grounded and refreshingly genuine. Even when she speaks about her goals to work for the betterment of the education sector, there is little of the pre-rehearsed beauty pageant answer tone in her voice. She sounds like she means it.

“Participating in Miss Nepal was something that had been on my mind ever since I came to Kathmandu,” says Subin, who came here in 2009 to go to college. “But, it wasn’t until this year that I felt completely ready.”

However, this is not the first time that Subin has won a crown. In 2010, she was named the first runner up in Miss Mongolia, a competition that she believes helped her while preparing for Miss Nepal. “During both the pageants, I enjoyed the training sessions the most as that is when the transition takes place,” she added.

Last month, Subin was appointed Young Conservation Ambassador by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal. She will be involved with the WWF’s Education Conservation program which works to create awareness on protection of flora and fauna and sustainable development. She will also be engaged in The Generation Green, an ambitious, five-year campaign that mentors Nepali youth.

“Since young people make up a very large part of Nepal’s population, they have a major role to play in conservation,” says Subin. As part of The Generation Green project, 50 well-known mentors are assigned to different youth groups who can join the campaign after pledging to support the values of the green initiative.

“All of us have heard about global warming, globalisation and environment deterioration, I now want to see the impact first hand and disseminate that knowledge to the youth,” she says.

Subin is currently busy with preparations for the Miss World pageant to be held in London on 14 December. The contest requires every contestant to select a project for its ‘beauty with a purpose’ segment. Former Miss Nepal Ishani Shrestha had won in the same category for her dental health camp project in rural Nepal.

When asked what her project is and if she thinks she can bring the international title home, Subin doesn’t want to reveal it. “You will know once the announcement is made,” she says coyly, “but it is related to education.”
Jumping Frog, A mask, puppet and musical play about the love story of a frog. 22 August to 21 September, 5.15 pm, Mandala Theatre, Anamnagar, (01)4249761

Caste system, A feature by Dr Sneham Prasain and Chau Kumari Sur on Nepal’s caste system. 29 August, 5.10 am, Shanker Hotel, Chyopanit

Festive Bhadra, Celebrate an array of festivals in this month of Bhadra: Tij, Gai Jatra Chaturthi, Rishi Panchami, Indra Jatra, Bal diwas

Bollywood Night, a Bollywood themed fundraiser with Bollywood setting and music 22 August, 12.15 pm, Sattva Crowne Plaza Kathmandu

Vo’ye, Celebrate Indra Jatra with a grand Newari feast Rs 1250, 9 September, 5.30 pm, Jyatha, Thamel

Red Carpet, Look down at the busy and happening Darbar Marg while dining at a lavish, cozy place that serves delightful cuisines. Dwarika Mary

Noyoz, This tiny little joint serves food that tastes like your mother’s home cooking. Noyoz

Maya Devi Village Restaurant, Enjoy a BLT sandwich with fresh fruit, murti and yohurt while enjoying the sunrise. Pokhara, 9806667917, mayadevivillage.com

La Casita De Boudhanath, Enjoy a host of Mediterranean cuisine with a breathtaking view of the Boudhanath Stupa. Boudha

Lanhua, The best of Chinese cuisine at great prices. Lakeside, Pokhara

Indra Jatra, Revel in an exhilarating evening of traditional dances, music and Newari cuisine on Indra Jatra. 22 August, 8 September, 6:30 pm, The Oberoi’s Hotel, Bhatpur (01)4479488, sales@dwarikas.com

Vo’ye, Celebrate Indra Jatra with a grand Newari feast Rs 1250, 9 September, 5.30 pm, Jyatha, Thamel

Art conversation, Visual Artist Sujan Chitrakar will be talking about Mural Arts. 29 August, 4.30 pm, Janapad Museum, Boudha, (01)4481786

Charya Nritya, Experience Kathmandu’s version of dance meditation under the tutelage of Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and immerse yourself in nature, consciousness and compassion. Rs 1600, 1 to 14 September, 12.15 pm, inneradventuretravel.com

Charya Nritya, Experience Kathmandu’s version of dance meditation under the tutelage of Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and immerse yourself in nature, consciousness and compassion. Rs 1600, 1 to 14 September, 12.15 pm, inneradventuretravel.com

Newa film festival, support local filmmakers, skip the mall, and come enjoy an open air film screening every evening for a week. 6 to 12 September, jankahal, Kathmandu

Degaa Resto Lounge, for mouth-watering Newari and Indian cuisine. Komarpot

Media workshop, join Anup Chitrav, a retouching and image enhancement workshop. Rs 3500, 1 to 10 September, 11 am to 1 pm, Sattva, Jawalakhel

Alresco, For homemade pasta and other lip-smacking delights. Sattva Crowne Plaza, (01)4273999
Gopalaya,
A repertoire of Gopal Yonjan’s musical works performed by singers like Uday Sotang, Reema Gurung Hoda, Manoj Raj and Banika Pradhan.
30 August, 4.30 to 7pm, Army Officer’s Club

Rock of Ages,
A series of energetic tributes to rock legends like Van Halen, Nirvana and Tool by bands like The Maze, Newax and Quinieval
30 August, 1pm to 6pm, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel

Under-ground Gig,
Where anyone can perform to keep rock alive.
Rs 150, 30 August, 1 to 6 pm, Rhapsody Hall, Kuntanpani

Roots night,
Step up to the futuristic tunes and yet, go ‘o school Jamaican Style
10 September, 7pm onwards, Peace Restaurant & Bar, Thamel

The great Duo,
A fundraising show for flood survivors, performed by Alon and Brittany
Rs 200, 30 August, Zero Resto & Bar, Thamel

House Day,
A gig show with live performers by bands like The Last Source, Edwardian, Faller Antipody
Rs 250, 30 August, 3pm onwards, House of Music, Thamel

Shangri-La Village Resort,
for the best view of the Annapurna range and great services
Monsoon Mysteries Package
2 nights/3 days for Rs 5555 per person on twin sharing basis
Until 30 September, 4412999/4410051

Getting away
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This May, Seb Toussaint and Spag of Outside Krew visited the Bhaisighat slum on the banks of the Bagmati at Teku and asked residents to choose words to be painted in their neighbourhood of ragged brick, banged-up wooden planks and corrugated tin. Toussaint was in Nepal with Share the Word, the project he has been taking to urban settlements around the world. Many locals allowed him to spruce up the walls of their ramshackle settlements with such uplifting words as ‘Welcome’ and ‘Dhanyabad’, and some even joined in the fun.

At some point, Toussaint decided to make an exception to his unwritten rule of not painting temples and churches. He wrapped up the project by spray-painting the façade of the sattal of the 19th century Shiva temple in Purohitghat, overlooking Bhaisighat. This is the same structure, dating from 1883, praised so wholeheartedly by art historians for the extraordinary design of its windows. By any standards, the Purohitghat sattal would qualify as heritage worthy of preservation. Yet Toussaint and Spag saw fit to distract from this remarkable window frame by framing it in technicolour cartoons. Why?

According to Toussaint, he was approached by the sadhu who looks after the temple. According to the Nepal Children’s Art Museum (which facilitated Toussaint and Spag’s stay here), the locals welcomed the change. The sadhu, meanwhile, admits he asked for the home improvements not just because it looked nice, but because after years of asking the authorities to restore the sagging, dilapidated façade, he wanted to grab their attention.

It took a while, but he has everyone’s attention now. When photos of Toussaint’s handiwork appeared on nepalnews.com last Sunday, Nepali social media imploded with indignation. Sujan Chitrakar of KU Art+Design spoke for many when he praised Toussaint on Facebook for his work in the community but
BIKRAM RAI lambasted him for cultural insensitivity and a lack of foresight in painting the sattal:

“The Shiva Temple, though not on the World Heritage Site List, has something to contribute to the remarkable cultural heritage and legacy of Nepal. Any kind of intruding and defacing it would be overlooking history of the place and hurting sentiments of my people. You have given wrong message to people and you will defame the entire artist community. There are many emerging Nepali artists who see hope in the streets and street art. Your ‘one wrong’ move can severely sabotage their dreams.”

Other commentators defended Toussaint’s aesthetic and his collaborative work with the otherwise neglected Bhaishaghat community, and privileged their right to determine the development of their surroundings. They also wondered why it had taken so long for anyone to notice the supposedly sacrilegious act - surely that suggested a broader national apathy towards heritage?

The subtext of the outrage, they implied, was elitist hostility towards the idea that slum-dwellers should be able to claim national heritage as their own and, in doing so, dispose of it as they saw fit.

For his part, Toussaint expressed surprise at the delayed reaction, so unlike the instantaneous delight of the local community. He maintained that he was glad that a debate was taking place.

Yet neither belated awareness nor the fact of Purohitghat’s neglect can justify Toussaint’s act. And surely a single community cannot have exclusive say over the treatment of a public monument, a distinct part of our heritage and one that predates Bhaisahi by at least a century?

At an animated discussion at the City Museum Kathmandu on Monday, Sujan Chitrakar and Sangeeta Thapa warned that if individual artists did not exercise due care, they could face a backlash from extremist elements and the state. The artists present, including Dashesh Shrestha and Aditya Aryal, agreed they would never consider painting over a temple as they knew their limits; it was crucial however for visiting artists to consult with local artists. Karl Knapp and Taka Otsu pointed out the difficulties in containing such art forms as graffiti. What if newer artists did not possess the requisite ‘common sense’?

The consensus was that a negative act should be transmuted into something positive: research was needed to find a way to restore the façade of the sattal, to be documented in a way to raise awareness about the nature of cultural heritage, our attitudes towards it, and the role of public art.

Yet another lesson was that if the act of Purohitghat’s neglect can justify Toussaint’s act, and surely a single community...
At this year’s Emmy Awards (which honour the best American prime-time shows) - all the usual suspects shored up well-deserved plaudits. We look back (with a bias for drama and comedy) at last year in American television and anticipate what might be worth waiting for in the next 12 months.

No one was surprised when *Breaking Bad* pipped every other show to the coveted ‘Outstanding Drama Series’ award. For the last five years we have been empathising with its unsympathetic hero/villain Walter White (Bryan Cranston), a chemistry professor who, after being diagnosed with cancer, makes meth to support his family. In White’s mundane existence we see ourselves and long to ‘break bad’ when he is compelled to go rogue. The only downer – our tacit approval of drug-making will likely end this year as the series ended after five successful seasons. Thankfully, there is no end in sight for Game of Thrones, the HBO series that has made the English of yore cool again and given weddings a bad name. Last season, we saw Tyrion, Arya and all the other sorry underdogs get the better of their circumstances, while queen superior and moral compass Daenerys faced uncountable ethical dilemmas that beset rulers. The bad guys may have lost this round, but they’ll be back next year with more conspiracy and deceit. In the meantime, winter is coming, so better start reading George RR Martin’s magnum opus and continue the guess game: who really is Jon Snow’s mother?

**HAPPENINGS**

**ALL TALK:** Baburam Bhattarai chairs a meeting of the CA Dialogue Committee at Singha Durbar on Monday.

**CHILD LIKE:** Indian actor Anupam Kher talks about his play *Kuch bhi ho sakta hai* at a press conference in Kathmandu.

**SOLO ACT**: Indian actor Anupam Kher talks about his play *Eish bhi bho sakta hai* at a press conference in Kathmandu.

**BUCKET FULL**: Students in Kathmandu on Wednesday ready buckets with food and other essentials for delivery to families affected by floods in mid-western Nepal.

**TRIALER:** nepaltimes.com

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delicious, selection of vegetarian buffet also has a smaller, yet a sample. chicken, lamb or seafood is worth vegetables and, of course, comprising of noodles, rice, in taste, the Mongolian barbeque hot skewer as it was eating them. watering meat being grilled on the as joyful watching the mouth typical Punjabi kebabs. It was barbeque stall that prepares BBQ bazaar also has a separate to set aside a favourite. all the finger-licking good Indian dishes. A handful of subtle selections that balanced the mishmash of flavours like Makkai Tikka, Palak Wadi and Paneer Kadai stood out. And for those who need to have a little bit of Nepali in their diet, there’s also a Newari counter, which serves the popular set Samay Baji. With a delightful assortment of salads, traditional Punjabi dishes and a scrumptious variety of desserts, it is easy to spend your entire time sampling everything on offer. But, do take the time to venture around this gorgeous property and well, if the appetite builds up, there’s always more on the table. Along with the buffet, guests can enjoy a swim and take a swing at golf. Take your kids along too. Acclaimed chef Anthony

For those looking to brunch their Saturdays away amidst lush green surroundings, the Bar-Be-Que Brunch Bazaar at the Gokarna Forest Resort might just be the place for you. Every Saturday for the whole of August, the resort known for its pristine environ and beautiful golf course, has been preparing a lavish buffet of Hyderabadi and Punjabi cuisine. Take a chance this Saturday before the month ends, and sample what’s on offer between 12 to 2.30pm.

From Macchi Amritsari to the popular set Samay Baji. There are a lot of mutton dishes - Kulla Ghost, Rara Ghost and Mutton Chapli Kebabs to name a few. Amidst all the finger-licking good Indian cuisine, it was next to impossible to set aside a favourite.
Apart from the buffet, the BBQ bazaar also has a separate barbeque stall that prepares typical Punjabi kebabs. It was as joyful watching the mouth watering meat being grilled on the hot skewer as it was eating them. For those seeking a change in taste, the Mongolian barbeque comprising of noodles, rice, vegetables and, of course, chicken, lamb or seafood is worth a sample.
Vegetarians, fret not. The buffet also has a smaller, yet delicious, selection of vegetarian dishes. A handful of subtle selections that balanced the mishmash of flavours like Makkai Tikka, Palak Wadi and Paneer Kadai stood out. And for those who need to have a little bit of Nepali in their diet, there’s also a Newari counter, which serves the popular set Samay Baji. With a delightful assortment of salads, traditional Punjabi dishes and a scrumptious variety of desserts, it is easy to spend your entire time sampling everything on offer. But, do take the time to venture around this gorgeous property and well, if the appetite builds up, there’s always more on the table. Along with the buffet, guests can enjoy a swim and take a swing at golf. Take your kids along too.
Acclaimed chef Anthony Bourdain once famously said good food and good eating were all about taking risks. Risk missing this out out at your own loss.

Great Food Deserves Carlsberg

That calls for a Carlsberg
Sita, a 38-year-old Nepali bank teller, came to her doctor’s office with diffuse pain throughout the body, saying she had difficulty concentrating since the last three months. She said she was also irritable, easily fatigued, and was becoming insomniac. The pain was difficult to localise but was not relieved by taking ibuprofen. Sita admitted she had a long history of being anxious about the smallest things. On examination she had generalised pain when the muscles of her neck, back, arms and legs were pressed. Laboratory tests, which included a complete blood count, thyroid, liver, and kidney function tests showed everything else was completely normal.

Patients with non-localised aches and pains are difficult for the doctor to diagnose, and often become a source of impatience. The patients then leave the doctor’s office with a handful of vitamins and paracetamol.

However the problem Sita presents is common throughout the world, and is also regularly seen in Nepal. In medical school we were unaware about what is now called fibromyalgia.

Up to 5-10 per cent of visitors to a general practitioner are fibromyalgia patients. It is not confined to any particular geographical region, ethnicity or climate. So it is possible to come across many patients like Sita whether in the Tarai, Kathmandu or the mountains.

Patients like Sita will do the usual rounds of different doctors without really being properly diagnosed. In the past, we would strongly consider sending them to the “bone” doctor (orthopedic surgeon) due to the extensive aches and pains. But the orthopedic surgeon who is very adept at fixing broken bones would find the vague aches and pains a real challenge to treat.

The mechanism of the disease is unclear, but it occurs in a skewed 9:1 female-to-male ratio, and it is associated with disturbed sleep and abnormal pain perception. Unfortunately, there is no specific blood test for this and diagnosis of fibromyalgia remains limited to patients’ history and physical examination. Basic blood tests are only done to rule out other diseases which may present in a similar fashion.

It is traditionally said the focus of treatment should not be on eliminating pain but rather improving quality of life through multidisciplinary exercise programs that include aerobics, strength training, and relaxation techniques like yoga and Tai Chi. Drug therapy is available for fibromyalgia, but drugs like ibuprofen generally have no role.

Importantly, antidepressants like amitriptyline which can also double up as pain and sleep medicines have shown some efficacy. In medicine it is important to avoid unnecessary drugs as it is to identify effective ones. Many doctors will not know about fibromyalgia, and due to the diffuse aches and pain, may prescribe painkillers, which are most useful when fibromyalgia is triggered by a long-standing disease like rheumatoid arthritis.

Fibromyalgia is so common that although it was required to demonstrate pain on palpation at 11 to 18 tender points, the specialists in this field would strongly consider sending them to the “bone” doctor (orthopedic surgeon) due to the extensive aches and pains. But the orthopedic surgeon who is very adept at fixing broken bones would find the vague aches and pains a real challenge to treat.

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CLEANSE, TONE, MOISTURISE

Spending time outdoors in the summer is great but when you do so without taking the necessary care of your skin, it can lead to lasting damages. Sun burn, sun tan and dryness are some of the problems that will trouble you when you forget to put on your sun screen before soaking up the sun.

In my previous columns, I have written about different homemade remedies to cure sun burn. This one will thus focus on following a daily beauty regimen that will help you with common skin problems faced during summer.

One of the most common skin problems people have this season is skin dryness. As the summer tan wears out, the skin loses its glow and it ends up looking dull.

Cleansing is one of the easiest and most effective ways to restore the lost radiance, and should be an essential part of your skin care routine. Cleansing helps remove not just makeup but also the large amount of impurities the skin collects during the day, and given the pollution in the city, it would be sinful if you didn’t cleanse your skin morning and night. But be careful not to wash your face with a soap. Doing so will leave the skin dry and tight. Use a deep cleansing face wash that not just moisturises your skin but also breaks into the tan to let fresh cells emerge, hence ensuring radiant skin.

The next important step is to use a toner. The toner restores the skin’s natural pH balance, which is disturbed after a wash. Toners also help exfoliate the skin.

Summer heat and humidity, with strong UV rays, are also main causes for ageing skin. Moisturising your skin day and night with the right cream will go a long way in maintaining skin’s youthful bloom. Choose a cream that has ‘anti-ageing’ quality and use it generously over your face, neck and hands. Many in their 20s may wonder why they need to use ‘anti-ageing’ creams, but this depends more on skin quality than age. Some people in their 30s have better skin than those in their 20s, and this is because of the difference in lifestyle. But because ‘anti-ageing’ creams for all age groups are widely available today, the choice has become much easier.

A common misconception about moisturising is that people with oily skin can skip this step. This is totally misfounded. If you count on nature to moisturise your skin, the body will produce too much natural oil, which clogs the pores and results in blemishes. Use a light lotion over cream.

Similar to oily skin, acne-prone skin is the result of excess sebum in the follicles of your face, which causes the dogs to pore and cause pimples. Search for cleaners that contain per cent benzoyl peroxide.

Normal skin is the most preferred skin type. Not too oily or not too dry, those with normal skin have minimal enlarged pores and look radiant and healthy most of the time. Choose cleansers containing antioxidants, hydroxy acid, botanical anti-inflammatory agents and retinol.

Oily skin is the result of overactive sebaceous glands that produce too much sebum or natural oil. While this skin type is prone to acne, it is less prone to wrinkling. Cleaners with the same ingredients as normal skin can be used but avoid products containing natural or synthetic oils, perfumes, or additives.

Dry skin is the result of excessive sebaceous glands that produce too little sebum or natural oil. While this skin type is prone to acne, it is less prone to acne-prone skin is similar to oily skin, acne-prone skin is the result of excess sebum in the follicles of your face, which causes the dogs to pore and cause pimples. Search for cleaners that contain per cent benzoyl peroxide.

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While the rest of Nepal suffered massive landslides and floods, in the trans-Himalayan rain shadow the country’s largest and most remote district remained high and dry, in splendid isolation.

Dolpa is one of the last two among Nepal’s 75 districts that doesn’t yet have a road connection. Although a new highway from Jajarkot is under construction, for now the only access is on foot or flying to Jufal airport near the district capital of Dunai. For the rest of Nepal, the monsoon is the ‘off season’, but for Dolpa it is the peak time for trekking.

The district is tucked away behind the Dhaulagiri range and is topographically a part of the Tibetan Plateau. It has always remained cut off and secluded from the rest of Nepal because of its inaccessibility.

With the establishment of the Shey Phoksundo National Park (SPNP) in 1984, Dolpa opened up to limited tourism. As the largest and only trans-Himalayan national park in Nepal, SPNP ranks among the most spectacular and scenic destinations in the world. Eric Valli’s Oscar-nominated documentary, Caravan, gave Dolpa added publicity. It is one of those last places on Earth that is truly remote, where humans seem to be able to survive only because of their deep spirituality.

Along with its rugged treeless terrain, Dolpa’s jewel is Phoksundo Lake, a lapis lazuli-coloured body of water, it is Nepal’s deepest and second-largest lake. It was designated as a protected Ramsar site in 2007. The Park consists of trans-Himalayan flora, fauna and ecosystems supporting prime habitats for rare and endangered species of plants and animals including the elusive snow leopard, musk deer and blue sheep.

The National Park contains numerous monasteries and religious sites, many of which have been renovated. Shey Gompa, the most famous one, was established in the 11th century. Thashung Gompa located near Phoksundo Lake was built 900 years ago and has played a role in conserving wildlife and preserving the proto-Buddhist Bonpo religion.

Conservation in this 1,350 sq km trans-Himalayan national park is a challenging task due to its size and remoteness, and because three VDCs Phoksundo, Vijer and Saldang are located inside the core area. Nine other VDCs are in the buffer zone. These have given rise to conservation problems such as over-exploitation of...
natural resources including illicit harvesting of medicinal plants and illegal hunting.

The government permitted the collection of yarsagumba inside the Park this year, allowing thousands of people from surrounding districts to over-run the Park every spring. This year, SPNP collected over Rs 23 million in fees. Management and conservation of the precious caterpillar fungus, and waste disposal have become critical issues.

Remoteness, lack of effective park management, limited human resources and the arrival of the road may give rise to overexploitation and haphazard extraction of valuable park resources.

Trekking tourism has become popular in recent years and over 600 trekkers visited Dolpa last year on special permits, and the growing popularity of the region has brought challenges and opportunities as traditional and modern worlds come together.

The local communities struggle to make a sustainable living while preserving their ancient heritage and environment. Fortunately, there is a culture of conservation among the people of Nepal’s most pristine area.

Hum Gurung, PhD, is with the Himalayan Sustainable Future Foundation.
Investing in investment

Interview with Radhesh Pant, CEO of Nepal Investment Board on Tough Talk, Ama Na, 24 August

Dil Bhutan Pathak: What is the investment Board’s current priority?
Radhesh Pant: Nepal signed a lot of agreements and contracts in the last 40 years, but nothing substantial happened. Our objective is to come up with a transparent process, change the way the government signs these deals, and also compete with other countries who are looking for similar investments. We feel we are close to achieving this. It takes a lot of time to realize projects that cost more than $100 million in minute details. It might look like we are doing nothing, but we want to assure everyone that we are working hard behind the scenes.

What would you say are your main accomplishments since the Board was set up?
We have almost finalised the Project Development Agreement for hydropower development. We have drafted a nine-point principle to ensure that the PDA doesn’t go against Nepal’s interests. Third, we have calculated risks against opportunities so that investors can decide if the investments are viable. Fourth, there is no more anything we are usually perceived to be doing or not doing. Fifth, we have started studies and investigations to ensure that our actual work was. But these are small problems and should not divert our focus. Sixth, we have started working on updating the project. Seventh, we have begun setting up the company that will come to Nepal to successfully in the next seven years.

Which are those?
There are five hydropower projects: Upper Kamali, Arun III, West Seti, Upper Marsyangdi, Tamakoshi III that are almost finalising to total 5,000 MW. A project for waste-management is also underway. We have started studies for a chemical fertiliser plant, which will have a large impact on Nepal’s agriculture. The problem here is that even feasibility studies take at least a few years, construction comes much later.

Which investors have actually signed on the dotted line so far?
There have been some investors, but these projects are so costly that investors want some sort of guarantee before taking the plunge. A major obstacle is that we don’t have political consensus about these projects. I don’t mean to say stability automatically brings in money, but even during this transition we could have stabilised policies. Now that there is an elected government with a majority in the house, everyone feels we must squander the opportunity.

Aren’t you afraid that politicians will never come to consensus because they want their cut from these projects? For Nepal’s sake, we must stop talking like that because these ‘expenses’ will also be added to project costs. Second, we must realise the companies that come to Nepal will not be the best ones in the world. If you look back 40 years, you will see what I mean. If we are to bring in the best, we must also be transparent.

Is it the Board’s decision to see eye-to-eye with the line ministries. True. Totally untrue. If we didn’t have their support, we wouldn’t be where we are today. We are a new department in the government, so at first people were a bit apprehensive about what our actual work was. But these are small problems and should not distract us from our main focus – bringing in investments. It doesn’t matter who does this – the board, the ministry, or some other agency – but it has to happen.

Have you been able to explain to politicians the kind of opportunities you see for Nepal?
Yes, we have had a political dialogue group that holds regular meetings with senior leaders. Our politicians get a lot of information from various sources, including people with vested interests. We are too emotional and ideological about our resources and investment opportunities. It is time to get real. There is a definite deficit of trust, but we have been trying hard to teach everyone what Nepal stands to gain from consensus.
The true extent of human suffering from western Nepal floods is belatedly apparent

HOMELESS: Mankumari Tharu and her husband in their ruined home in Phattepur of Banke district.

NARESH NEWAR
in BANKE

Mankumari Tharu (pic) looks on silently as she relates how the flood on the Rapti River two weeks ago swept away her home and farms in the village of Phattepur.

This is the first outsider she has seen since that fateful day: no disaster relief team, no government, no media has been here even though the village is just 30km east of Nepalganj.

“We have nothing left,” she says, gesturing feebly at the ruins of her home. “I just don’t know how we can start our lives again.”

The road to Phattepur was washed away by the raging Rapti, and only motorcycles take the risk to negotiate muddy side-roads. The nearest relief camp is a five hour walk away, but most survivors are too exhausted from lack of food, dehydration and rebuilding homes to make the trek.

Phattepur’s inhabitants are mostly Tharu, the proud and self-sufficient indigenous people of the Tarai who have learnt to live with monsoon floods. In fact, they benefit from annual floods that replenish nutrients in their fertile farms.

But, even old-timers here don’t remember a deluge of this scale. When the local police station got a warning call from Nepalganj at midnight on 14 August, they set off the siren for so long that it broke down. It woke everyone up and they climbed trees and stayed atop roofs. When the flood didn’t arrive, at daybreak the villagers returned to their homes. But suddenly at 9:30 AM, the water started rising and engulfed their homes.

“It happened so quickly, there was no time to save our food store and valuables,” recalls 25-year-old Bighani Chaudhary, a mother of two small children. She lost all her belongings, her crops and all she has left now is a damaged home.

The VDC is the only sign of government presence, but it, too, is overwhelmed by the emergency. Six people were killed in Phattepur, and although this is much lower than the devastation upstream, the victims are completely destitute and left to fend for themselves.

Trucks can only come up to Rapti Bridge, and relief will have to be carried on foot the rest of the way. Over 3,500 families are in need of immediate food, water and shelter in Phattepur. The ground water is polluted, and there is a need for longer-term rehabilitation.

“The Nepalganj office and aid agencies are trying to help, but the roads have been washed away,” says VDC member, Ram Naresh Dubey.

INGOs are stepping in because the government has been overwhelmed. “We are starting a recovery program in Phattepur very soon,” says Dhruva Debkota of Save the Children. The Banke CDO office says 10 per cent of the district’s farmlands have been submerged.

Some farmers can be seen fishing in the water where their paddy crops used to be. “This used to be my farm but I can’t wait for government help,” says 42-year-old Ram Chander Yadav, who was born on the day the last big flood hit the village.

With the Rapti flowing over their farms, many villagers have moved into the forests along the banks because they have nowhere else to go. Thirty-year-old Mankumari Tharu clutches her two-month old son in the shade of the forest with 10 other members of her family.

She says: “We have relatives but they are also poor and we are just a burden for them.”

The true extent of human suffering from western Nepal floods is belatedly apparent...
More glad tidings and inspiring tales of triumph from the triumphs of the human spirit. So, here are the main points in this News Bulletin to uplift your sagging spirits:

Nepal Breaks Human Flag Record
FROM A NEWSPAPER OF RECORDS

Former prime minister, the Rt Hon Ma Ku Koirala, firmly asserted that Nepal has entered the Guinness Book of World Records by being the biggest human flag in the world. The feat at Tundikhel on Saturday (picture above) amassed a crowd of cheering onlookers by climbing up a flag pole and unfurling himself, while a helicopter hovered overhead for aerial shots of the event.

“As a person whose country is his namesake, I thought it was my pious duty to fly the flag of a nation I am proud to call my own,” said the visibly exhausted, but exhilarated, ex-PM.

No Oil Price Hike This Week
BY OUR CRUDE REPORTER

Breaking from its usual tradition, Nepal Oily Corporation (NOC) failed to announce its weekly increase in petroleum prices this Friday, saying it hadn’t finished distributing kickbacks and payoffs to crooks who never got caught for feeding the country’s pelfagery and adulteration.

“But not to worry, we’ll make up for this lapse with a double-digit increase next week,” a senior NOC official assured reporters, adding that the price increase was good news for those stealing diesel from tankers and those committing adultery at the pumps because every increase represented a higher profit margin.

Consumers were also quick to see a silver lining. “The price hike means I now have to hike to work, which must be good for my health,” said one motorcycle rider.

Nepal Has Failed Successfully: Experts
KATHMANDU (IRIN) - The Organisation of Failed States (OFS) has finally decided to grant permanent membership to Nepal in recognition of the country’s laudable efforts in showing the rest of the world the way backward.

Delegates from all countries that are proud to call themselves ‘failed’ are arriving in Kathmandu next week to take part in a three-day international seminar titled ‘How To Ruin Your Motherland in Five Easy Steps’. The conference is expected to formally approve Nepal’s accession to the OFS, which brings with it many benefits such as donors pouring more money after bad.

“This is indeed a great achievement, we have snatchedit defeat from the jaws of disaster,” said Prime Minister Jhusil Koirala. “But we can’t rest on our laurels, we must rest on our pillows and go back to sleep.”

The conference is also expected to pick Kathmandu as the venue to be set-up Research Institute for Failing States (RIFS), since it already hosts of its sister organisation, SAARC.

CPN(UML), NC, UCPN(M) OK HLCP
SPY AGENCIES

KATHMANDU – The top leaders of the three main parties Thursday held a meeting, their fifth in as many days, and were able to break the deadlock on the High Level Political Committee (HLPC) by deciding to locate it at Lobuje below Mt Everest.

Disagreement on an agreement to agree to disagree on the location had been holding up the decision for many weeks, raising fears of a further delay in the constitution-writing timetable.

“The agreement on the HLPC paves the way for a consensus on contentious issues in the constitution,” said a high-level source speaking through an oxygen mask. “We hope the ratified atmosphere will expedite decision-making since some leaders will have stopped breathing at some point.”

Nepal, India To Swap Prime Ministers
PRESS TRUST IN INDIA

As a further step in cementing the close age-old ties and improving bilateral relations between India and Nepal, the two countries have decided to trade their prime ministers.

An MoU to this effect was signed this week between the Trade Ministers of the two countries, with officials describing it as ‘mutually beneficial barter agreement’.

“Modiji is so popular in Nepal that he would actually be elected if he stood for elections there,” an AMea spokesman said, “and taking over as prime minister of India would wake up Mr Koirala.”

World’s Largest Ass Discovered in Nepal
KATHMANDU (Animal Planet) – Among the three new species of mammals discovered in Mustang this month is the world’s largest donkey (pic, above), the National Trust for Nature Conservation announced today.

Besides new species of Steppe Polecat (Mustela eversmanii) and the Tibetan Wolf (Canis lupus chanco) caught accidentally last week on camera traps for tracking snow leopards was the Nepal Ass (Equus nepalensis asinus).

The images proved beyond doubt that Nepal asses are some of the biggest asses in the world, said zoologist Dr Robert Schnell. “Donkeys are usually small and sticky but these asses have stature, they are humongous.”

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